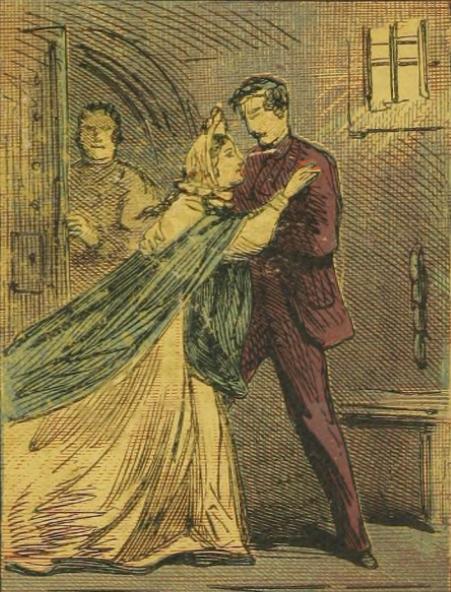
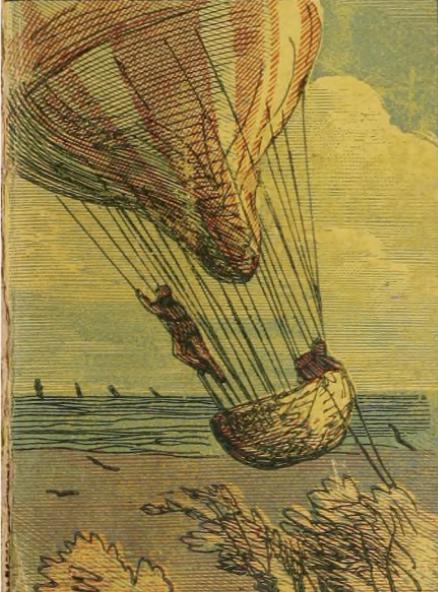
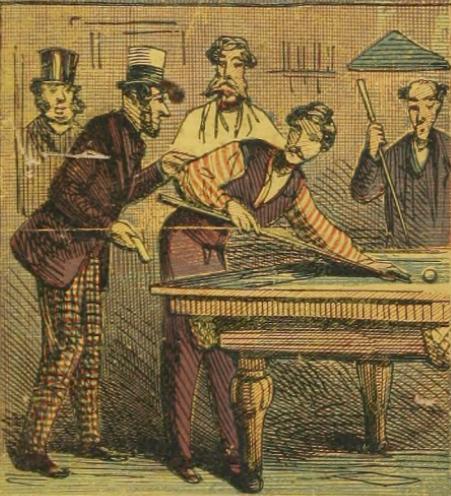
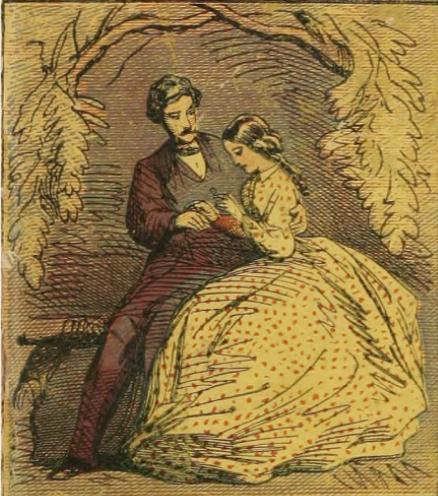


WILD OATS

BY

SIR LASCELLES WRAXALL



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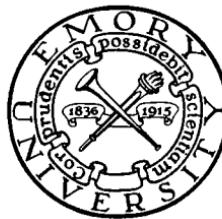
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LASCELLES WRAXALL.

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WILD OATS.

CHAPTER I.

INJUSTA NOVERCA.

" 'Tis a way we have in the army,
'Tis a way we have in the navy,
"Tis a way we have in the 'varsity,
To drive dull care away!"

SUCH was the burden of a song which was being executed to a variety of voluntary tunes by a party of young men assembled in the rooms of Mr. Charles Dashwood, at St. Barnabas College, Oxford. Charley had just slipped through his "smalls" by an accident, and, according to prescriptive law, was compelled to celebrate the event by a wine party. Had the parents of these young men been able to take an Asmodean peep at the way in which their sons considered they were properly preparing themselves for the pulpit they would, no doubt, have felt highly gratified. The dessert was extravagantly abundant. The confectioner at the corner had received orders to supply it for twenty; and, according to his view of the matter, he had sent in enough for forty. His arrangement with the scouts insured him the return of what was not consumed or wantonly destroyed, and his policy rendered him liberal. There was a terrific display of ices and sweet cakes, for the "men," as they proudly termed themselves, had not quite forgotten their schoolboy tastes. Of the wine I need say nothing, save that it was hot, sweet, and strong; and, as the men generally smoked with their port, their palate required something more piquant than France or Germany could supply.

At the moment when my story commences the company were beginning to show the effect of the beverages they had imbibed; they were growing excited, and, after the Oxford fashion, could only display that excitement in noise. My hero's health had been drunk uproariously, and he had returned thanks in a neat speech. During the necessary silence several of the men were amusing themselves by digging holes in the ices, and filling them up with cigar-ash—a lively and intellectual amusement, but probably better than others in which they were wont to indulge. Various songs were then sung, apparently reminiscences of the Coal-hole and Cider Cellars, of which the point consisted in most improper allusions, but which were received with the most enthusiastic applause.

During the lulls of noise the conversation which went on was well suited to the company. It turned principally on fortunate escapes from proctors and nocturnal exploits in the lower parts of the city, or else on the boat races, and the chance which Barnabas had of bumping Brazenose. But you may be sure there was not a word by which these young men displayed the idea that they had come to Oxford for any ulterior object. With them "sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof;" and they lived entirely for the present, careless of duns, or of the sufferings their follies would eventually entail upon them.

Nor, on reflection, does it seem surprising that such should be the result of college education. A quantity of boys are removed from public schools, where they have been laying up a stock of vice, and practising the worst form of hypocrisy in blinding their masters as to their pursuits. All they feared was detection. Their moral sense had been blunted by the liberty allowed them during play hours, which they enjoyed in low pot-houses, if not in something worse. As long as their exercises were prepared their masters cared little about them, for the school wanted crack scholars, and morality was quite a makeweight. On arriving at college these boys were honoured with the title of "men," but were still treated as boys. Certain things were forbidden them, and, by the perversity of human nature, those were the very things they most desired to do.

It seems to me that the art of logic has been diverted to many curious purposes at Oxford, else I could not understand how it is legal to drive a gig, while a tandem entails rustication, or how a beaver is quite allowable at Head-

ington, while it is punished by a fine in the "High." The system pursued by the proctors leads to falsehood, and the most moral youth, by force of example, becomes indifferent to truth. *Facilis descensus Averni!*

Charles Dashwood was a brilliant example of the blessings of college education. He had come up from a public school with a valuable exhibition and a perfect library of prizes. The head master had predicted for him a splendid career at Oxford, and, at the time we first make his acquaintance, he was rapidly on the road to ruin. Oxford life is so pleasant to a Freshman, and the feeling that you can satisfy every luxury without an immediate appeal to your pocket is irresistible. His father, a retired officer, scraped together eighty pounds a year at the expense of the rest of the family, and this, with the exhibition, he fondly hoped would amply provide for his darling son. It just paid his college bills and battels, and allowed him a run up to town when he thought proper; but, in the meanwhile, his name was entered in every tradesman's book. The amount he owed his tailor would keep the folk at home for a year. How it was to be paid was a mystery to him whenever he thought on the subject, and that was only when he felt very seedy from a debauch. Micawber-wise he trusted that something would turn up, and, in the meanwhile, increased his debts. His stock of Latin and Greek was rapidly diminishing, for the only time he took up a book was at lecture, and he found, with some surprise, that he had great difficulty in passing his "little go," although a year before he would have laughed at the examination. In a word, he had become a thorough Oxford man, one of the most useless and noxious animals in existence.

I am afraid that my hero (for such Charley Dashwood is) will prove no favourite with my readers at present, but fortunately he will not remain an Oxford man during the whole of his career; if so, I would throw down the pen in disgust.

The wine party had by this time reached that state of excitement when the confinement of college was unbearable; and, as Great Tom was just commencing his solemn peal, there was a sudden picking up of caps and gowns for the sake of saving the gate. They rushed out in a body, and, after calling at various publics and drinking large quantities of beer, they slipped one by one up a dark entry, and soon found themselves in a billiard room, of which the windows were hermetically closed; for, had the proctors

been aware that their rules were so audaciously infringed, the consequences would have been serious to all parties.

But, though billiards is a game at which a considerable amount of money can be lost in a short time, it did not appear sufficiently fast for my young friends. They retired into a small back room, where cards were produced and lansquenet commenced. Charley was remarkably lucky; he held the bank several times in succession; and when the party broke up, warned by the billiard-table keeper that it was on the stroke of twelve, he was a winner of nearly eighty pounds. There was then a rush back to college, no time being allowed for breaking windows on the road, and they succeeded in getting in just as the clock was finishing striking. Had they been one second after twelve they would have been pulled up the next morning by the dean, and probably "gated" for the rest of the term. As it was, they had to pay two shillings and sixpence apiece to the porter, and all was in order. Such is the value of a minute sometimes at Oxford, where generally time is regarded as the most worthless of God's gifts.

But the evening's amusements were not yet concluded. As there would be no fear of listening or prying scouts after the sacred hour had struck they began gambling again and drinking heavily. Charley, however, could not be induced to join them. He was "down in the mouth," as they classically termed it; and, though he drank hard to keep his spirits up, it was of no effect. While the rest were playing, and swearing at intervals in a manuer which far surpassed "our army in Flanders," he retired moodily to a corner and took up a book. It proved to be Poe's wild and fantastic stories, in which he grew deeply interested; but at length it fell from his hands, and he sank into a brooding reverie, such as, I trust, few of my readers have ever known.

As in a mirror rose up all the sins of which he had been guilty—the opportunities neglected; a fond father deceived; his loving sisters at home so proud of his success, and anticipating the brilliant position he would hereafter achieve for himself. Then his thoughts reverted to his tender mother, who had so lovingly patted his head when he sate at her knees reading some marvellous fairy romance, and had hoped that he would grow into a good man—poor soul! she had no doubt about his becoming great. And of her last words to him as she lay on that bed of sickness from which she never rose, "Charles, comfort your poor

father when I am gone. I know you will protect your sisters, for they have no one to look to but you." Then that ghastly hour recurred vividly to his mind when the consciousness gradually came to him that his mother was really dead; his frantic clutching at the looking-glass, for he had read that persons have been considered dead, and their existence has been proved by a faint breath on a mirror; then the dreadful morning, chill and rainy, when his mother was borne to her last home, himself and his father the solitary mourners; of the difficulty he had to induce his father to come home, and his vain attempts to comfort one "who refused to be comforted," till he reminded him there were others left to be a mainstay to him in his great affliction.

On all this he thought with agony; of the high resolves he had formed to follow his mother's exhortations to the letter; how he would read hard, and fight the rough battle manfully till he had achieved fame and fortune for himself and family. The future loomed mistily before him, but the glowing sun of hope dispelled the cloud veil, and he saw himself rewarded for his labours: who can say by what? His Helen, too, the first object of his young affections, whom he had fallen in love with Werther-like, and who felt so proud that Charley had condescended to her—Charley, who was to be so great a man, while she had no prospect before her save the dreary life of a governess!

And now what was he? He gnashed his teeth as he thought of the past and of the present. With his great abilities he had lowered himself to the level of his companions, and had wasted his time and energies by becoming a drunkard and a gambler. The image of his Helen had been almost obliterated by the foul society to which he had fallen a too willing victim. Even the locket she had given him with her hair, and which he had worn round his neck, was now buried in his desk; for had he not yielded to the sarcasms of the worthless woman who had jeered him about his bread-and-butter love?

But was there any mode of escape? Must he not still remain three years in that accursed web of folly and extravagance which encompassed him like the garment of Nessus? He had not the moral courage to break through. He felt that he could not endure the gibes of his friends, or that odious idea of being regarded as a "sap." There was no escape; he must go on from bad to worse; then,

hang it, why think about it any longer? It was not his fault, but that of the system; so with a loud shout of "Seven's the main!" he rushed to the table, and soon became absorbed in the excitement of hazard. Luck still adhered to him. He played madly and won, till at last the company ceased playing, for there was no prospect of fortune turning, and their pockets were quite exhausted. It was a rule among the fraternity that no I O U's should be allowed; for the risk they ran of detection, and consequent expulsion, rendered them averse from any system of credit among themselves. That they left to the tradespeople. With the break up of the party Charley was a winner of one hundred and forty pounds.

The change from the stifling room to the cool quadrangle, with the moon lighting up the exquisitely carved chapel front, and almost quenching the light still burning in some belated student's apartment, renewed the depression under which my hero was suffering. In fact, though he was unaware of it, he was on the eve of an attack of delirium tremens. The wonder is that the disease is not more common at the universities; but it is only averted at the expense of health and constitution. All the excitement roused by play faded away, and he wearily ascended the staircase leading to his rooms. The oak was sported, and on entering he found the remains of the "wine" encumbering the tables, while a disgusting smell of stale tobacco and doctored wine hung about the room. He threw the windows open, and, on turning round suddenly to light the lamp, he found, to his great surprise, that he was not alone. Some one was seated in the arm-chair—a stranger evidently. So far he could distinguish; but the features were concealed from observation in his hands. Still the figure seemed strangely familiar to him, and suddenly it struck him that it was his father. But what could have brought him there at that hour? He had not written to say he was coming. Good God! what had happened, and why did he remain so motionless?

Charley rushed forward to welcome him, but at this moment the stranger stood up, and he recognised his father's features. He looked so stern, and yet so sad, that Charley did not dare address him. For an instant they stood gazing on each other, till Charley, by an irresistible impulse, moved forward. His father angrily raised his hand as if to strike him, and, as Charley involuntarily shrunk back to evade the blow, the figure disappeared.

My hero tried to reach the door and scream for help, but it was in vain. He had hardly taken two steps when he fell prostrate, and all was as a dream.

When the scout came in to call his master for chapel and bring the letters, he found him lying in the same position, his stertorous breathing alone evidencing that he still lived. A doctor was hurriedly summoned, and after a protracted bleeding Charley was restored to consciousness. His first words were, "The letters—give me the letters!" and he frantically clutched and tore open one in his sister's handwriting. His worst fears were anticipated. It was as follows:—

"DEAREST CHARLES,—For God's sake come home at once. Father has been suddenly taken ill after receiving a letter, and Dr. Snow says there is no hope for him, so come at once to your broken-hearted sister—JANE."

With a faint cry of "Dead, dead!" Charley fell back again on the sofa, and lay lost to consciousness for hours. When he awoke he was still weak and dizzy from the shock, but he felt that his presence at home was absolutely necessary, and he must make the exertion. By that night's mail he hurried up to town, and thence to the village of Birchmere, where he was anxiously awaited. The money he had won by gambling would be of the greatest use to him, for he knew that his father would have had but little in the house, and he determined to put it to a worthier purpose than the meditated trip to the Derby.

The death of his father was a heavy blow to my hero, for that he was dead he had not the least doubt after his nocturnal visitation. He did not conceive for a moment that it was merely an illusion engendered by his own dissipation and gloomy thoughts. He regarded it as a solemn warning sent from above, and if it serve to put him on the right path we have no right to cavil at his superstitious ideas. Let philosophers write as they will, and prove almost to demonstration that such spectral visitants are impossible; that, even allowing that a man may revisit the glimpses of the moon in a spiritual form, his clothes cannot appear as ghosts to confirm his presence—still the belief in spiritual manifestations will be held even by the wisest and most thoughtful of men. My hero had not as yet puzzled his brains with any such abstruse subjects. With him the visible was the real, and he solemnly believed that for some wise purpose his father had appeared to him. Hence, too, he was struck with a

feeling of awe that his father's last gesture should have been one of menace, and he was conscious that he had fully deserved it. But the thought that his father had quitted the world in anger with him depressed his spirits, and he would have made any sacrifice could he but recall him for a moment and entreat his forgiveness; but it was too late.

And such seems to be our lot through life. We always think that time will be granted us to make up any family quarrels, and appease the insulted feelings of relations. We gradually grow callous to the promptings of our hearts, and laugh off any better feeling. When the blow has fallen, when a beloved relation has gone from us for ever, we weep bitter tears at the remembrance of our shortcomings; we long for a moment in which to display our penitence; we make the most earnest resolves to take it as a warning—and in nine cases out of ten we go on just the same, as soon as the feeling of regret has been worn off by renewed contact with the world.

In his present state of mind Charley Dashwood was admirable. The frivolity and vanity of Oxford life appeared to him in their true colours, and he bitterly regretted the error of his ways. He resolved that he would act as a father to his orphan sisters; he would sedulously strive ——But his meditations were suddenly interrupted by a voice from the other corner of the railway carriage.

“Can you tell me, sir, at what time we shall reach Birchmere? I am in haste.”

“What, madam, are you going to our little village?”

“Yes, certainly; I am anxious to see Captain Dashwood immediately on most important business.”

A shudder was the only reply Charley could make for a minute. At last he mustered sufficient strength to answer,—

“I fear, madam, your journey will be in vain. My poor father is dead. Yes, I am sure he is dead——”

“Good heavens! then you are his eldest son, Mr. Charles? I am too late, and my journey is in vain. He will never learn the secret.”

“As my father's representative I shall be willing to afford you any service in my power.”

“No, no, no, I tell you. I wished to see Captain Dashwood: my business was with him. My poor mistress, what will she say? What can I do?”

For the rest of the journey the unknown kept up an impenetrable reserve; nor could Charley, who was beginning

to grow interested in the mystery, induce her to open her lips. On the train arriving at Birchmere he offered to assist her from the carriage, but she replied that she had changed her mind; she should go on to Wilmington, and there await further instructions. With this they parted, and Charley, more and more puzzled, went up the village to his now desolate home.

But before I ask you, reader, to accompany him thither, we had better take a peep for ourselves at the secluded village, and try to make ourselves acquainted with various facts which will throw light on Charley's present position and prospects.

CHAPTER II.

BIRCHMERE

BIRCHMERE, as all my readers know (for it has recently become a fashionable watering place and hydropathic establishment, presided over by a Dr. *von* something), is one of the prettiest villages on the south coast. The scenery is a charming combination of wood and water, only to be found in perfection at home, and the sea is only at a few miles' distance. To this retired spot Captain Dashwood had carried his *penates* soon after leaving the army, and had brought up his family respectably and comfortably. He had purchased a few acres of land and built a cottage, where he spent his time and his money in various agricultural schemes, while Mrs. Dashwood was engaged in making up his losses by the pursuance of strict economy. Here two children were born to him after our hero; they were both daughters, and their mother had devoted her best energies to giving them the best education in her power. She was no contemptible linguist and musician, and, had it not been for her failing health, they would have been fitted by birth and education to move in any circle of society. Unfortunately their mother was taken from them at that critical age when study is just beginning to be regarded as a pleasure instead of a duty, and, the compulsion being removed, they had pursued their studies in a desultory and unsatisfactory manner, the best, however, to adapt them for governesses in our present forcing system.

Captain Dashwood had through life been an unfortunate man. Younger son of Sir Amyas Dashwood, who had been promoted to the baronetage for his diplomatic talents, he had been brought up in expectations which were never destined to be fulfilled. At an early age he had obtained a commission in the artillery, and had behaved like most younger sons, by incurring debts which could only be liquidated by the death of his father. This event at length began to be regarded as his only safety-valve, and hence he soon felt indignant at his father cumbering the earth so long and so unnecessarily. An ill-feeling grew up between them, which the baronet never forgot, and he determined on punishing his son even after his own death. When Captain Dashwood had reached the mature age of forty he decided on leaving the army and marrying; and, as he possessed a magnificent income of £150 per annum, of course he selected a woman whose only dowry was her virtue. This widened the breach between the parent and son; and, although Sir Amyas was compelled, through his own pride, to double his son's income, he never would receive his daughter-in-law.

Things went on in this unsatisfactory manner for two years. The Dashwoods were well known in all continental towns where the English most do congregate: they were always engaged in making their income do double duty, and it was only the birth of Charles which for awhile saved the Captain from utter ruin. He possessed a considerable taste for play, which is the natural outlet for all ambitious men in the army, who feel disgusted at the nothingness of their life, and he gratified it to a pretty large extent. Post-obits were soon discovered to be a capital way of raising money, and the prospects of Captain Dashwood were beginning to look gloomy in the extreme when his father died.

On opening the old man's will it was found that, while the elder son was left £20,000 at his absolute disposal, the younger only received a reversionary interest in £10,000, payable on the death of his mother, and the interest for life on £5000, which was settled on Charles, my hero. But this again was fettered by a stringent clause: so soon as Captain Dashwood deceased, the interest of the £5000 would revert to the present baronet, and the principal would not be Charles' until his death. Such a scheme for the prospective advantage of lawyers was never before concocted; but it must be remembered that Sir Amyas made his own will, and we all know what sort of client he had.

Captain Dashwood was bitterly disappointed, the more so, probably, as he felt it was in a great measure his own fault; but that did not cause him to refrain from very violent language at home, to the great horror of his wife. But he was most enraged against his brother: they had not met for five years, and on the last occasion they had quarrelled fearfully. People whispered about a woman who had proved false to both; it was even said that they were on the point of fighting a duel across a table had not some persons interfered. His name was never mentioned in the family, and none of the children had ever seen him. The baronetage taught them that he was H.B.M. Envoy at Gürkenhof, and they knew no more.

But the Captain had no long time to speculate on his wrongs: his Hebrew creditors were down on him, and he found himself forced to dispose of his reversion to satisfy them. All that was left of the wreck was £2000, which he invested in land and in building a house at Birchmere, where he retired in disgust from the world. He devoted himself to agriculture, and teaching his children as they grew up around him the hollowness of the world, and if they did not become utter misanthropes it was owing to that strong innate affection which causes us to think well of our fellows, until bitter experience has taught us that the world is composed of two great classes, the cheaters and the cheated.

But in the Captain's house there was a skeleton cupboard: he suddenly gave way to the most unaccountable fits of depression and gloom, which his children were unable to dissipate. During his wife's life, it is true, these fits were few and far between, and were generally dissipated by a trip to the continent; but when she was removed he seemed to give way to them voluntarily. For days he would remain shut up in his study, and his children, when they dared peep in, saw only that he was engaged in reading a number of letters grown yellow with age, over which he would weep bitterly at one moment, and then break out in the most furious execrations.

I have forgotten to mention, however, that on Mrs. Dashwood's death the family circle was increased. The Captain disappeared mysteriously a few weeks after the funeral, and returned with a little girl of twelve years, who was introduced to the children as Helen Mowbray, and who soon grew a favourite with them all. They were taught to regard her as a sister, and she was the life of the household.

She alone could draw the Captain from his bitter fits of gloom and render him sociable.

The children employed all their cunning to discover Helen's antecedents, but could find out nothing, simply from the fact that she had nothing to tell. She had been at school as long as she could remember in a convent near Brussels, and had never seen any one but her father, as she called Captain Dashwood; while the only mother she had known was Sister Ursula, who used to give her cakes and coffee when she visited her room. So they gradually grew into the habit of looking on her as a sister, till progressing years taught Charles that his feelings were of a different nature.

At the time my story opens, Helen Mowbray was just eighteen, endued with all the charms and graces of that delicious age. To describe her is impossible, so I would ask my male readers to summon up their own ideal of feminine beauty: the loveliest of them all would only be a faint presentment of my darling Helen. There was a charming air of gravity about her, which formed an admirable contrast with her pouting lips, that looked as if "some bee had stung them newly." But this gravity was only real when she thought on her position, and the ignorance in which she was sedulously kept with reference to her parentage. Although she could effect so much with Captain Dashwood, this secret was kept inviolable; no coaxing, no tears could prevail on him to tell her who she was, or how he had become her guardian. It was, however, but rarely that Helen gave way to such gloomy thoughts; she was treated as a daughter, and, in the happy confidence of childhood, fancied that things would always go on in the present satisfactory state.

The remainder of the family consisted of the two daughters, Jane and Susan, who were now seventeen and fifteen respectively. I have already alluded to the state of their education, and at present have but little more to say about them: time will show whether they play any important part in the story. They were strong, healthy country girls, possessing that *beauté du diable* which leaves room for much conjecture as to whether the owners will turn out eventually handsome or ugly. They liked riding about the country, and were not particular as to their mount. If the ponies were engaged they would put up with donkeys, and generally preferred catching them off the common, without much regard as to their being the property of others. They had been brought up to feel an intense pride in their

ancestry, and to regard with due reverence the family coat-of-arms, which was hung up, framed and glazed, in the paternal study, and a still greater degree of pride, were that possible, in their brother Charley, the future baronet (for Sir Amyas was unmarried), who was destined to raise the family once again to an exalted rank. They were good-hearted, good-tempered girls, ready to make any sacrifices for others, even to the disappointment of not having a new bonnet when they thought they required it, in the thought that the money was being devoted to their brother. Let us sincerely hope that contact with the world and its cares will only develope their excellent qualities.

The death of their father, so unexpected and startling, was the first severe shock they had received; for it brought them at once into collision with external affairs, with which they were not fitted to cope. It is true that the elder girl had recently taken the place vacated by her mother as manager of the household; but her domestic education had been confined to consultations with her father as to dinner, and giving the requisite orders. As to method or regularity she was lamentably deficient, for Captain Dashwood was far too wont to let things take their course: he paid his bills without scrutiny, and as long as the money lasted he probably could not have hit on any better plan to keep things quiet and his daughters in ignorance.

When the blow fell, and they found themselves brought so roughly into contact with a pitiless world, the helplessness of these poor young creatures was truly painful. It may be evidenced in the fact that they placed their sole reliance in the presence of their brother, whose arrival they anxiously awaited. He was to be as a second father to them, and they trusted that his nineteen years would assume the gravity befitting so responsible a position. In her first feeling of despair Jane had written to her uncle, and was waiting longingly and yet fearfully for the answer. To her, biassed by home traditions, he appeared in the light of a domestic ogre—a devourer of other men's property—a cause of annoyance and grief to her dear father. She felt that she must appeal to him in their present strait, and yet she feared that he might be induced, through a feeling of affection, to come and see them in their affliction.

The first moments of Charley's arrival at home were devoted to that natural sorrow which affects us at the death of a near relative, but which among youth is so evanescent; and then the young representative of the family began to

look matters clearly in the face. For this purpose a message was sent off to Mr. Worthington, the family lawyer, who came down from town at once to look after affairs, and see what could be done for the family. Mr. Worthington was a capital old fellow, wore a frill, and took snuff from a gold box, with a stereotyped shake at the frill to remove the dropped snuff; but he was himself the father of a family, and took a strong interest in the orphans. He very decidedly pooh-poohed all the suggestions Jane made about their keeping on the house; said there would be time enough to attend to that when the will was read, "though," he said, "your army gentlemen are not much given to making wills; they think they're going to live for ever because they haven't been killed on the battle-field;" and gave it as his deliberate opinion that they had better bring him a bottle of the old port, which would help him to think over matters at his leisure.

But the shrewd lawyer was mistaken for once. The Captain *had* made a will, although the notion that he was going to live a very long time was prominent enough in it. On reading it was found that Captain Dashwood had calculated on his son's education being completed, for he left him nothing but his blessing. The girls were to have the proceeds of the estate, when sold, fairly divided between them; while Helen was left a plain gold ring and a locket, which the Captain always wore next his heart. The trustees were Mr. Worthington and Colonel Dacre, an old friend and fellow officer, who were earnestly entreated to take charge of the girls' property, although the Captain added, in a sort of epistle general annexed as codicil, that he felt sure his dear son would do all in his power to provide for them.

The funeral was scarcely over, and plans drawn out for the sale of the estate, when the long-looked-for letter from Sir Amyas also arrived. It was addressed to Charles Dashwood, Esq., for he was the only one of the family he recognised as being the future representative of the Dashwoods; but I had better quote it as it stands to give a fair idea of the writer.

“*Gürkenhof, June 8th, 1845.*

“NEPHEW,—I have received a letter from Miss Jane Dashwood, in which she informs me of the death of her father, Mr. Charles Dashwood. Permit me to observe that I was already acquainted with the fact through the *Times*. I should have thought it your duty to write to me on any

matters affecting the family, and I must therefore inform you that in future I shall take notice of no letters not coming from yourself.

"By the death of Mr. Dashwood I come into possession of the interest of £5000, left to you by your grandfather, the late Sir Amyas Dashwood. I am willing to allow you the sum of £250 a year until you come of age, which will be in two years I believe; and then it is possible that, if I am satisfied with your conduct, I may take such steps as will insure your success in life. You must, however, distinctly understand that you have no claim upon me, and that implicit obedience to my wishes will be the return I expect from you for any steps I may take in your behalf.

"I am your Uncle,

"AMYAS DASHWOOD."

"Pooh, pooh!" said the worthy lawyer, on hearing this avuncular missive read; "tell him you won't have his money. He'll make a slave of you, and as big a scoundrel — God forgive me! — as himself, though that would be difficult," he added parenthetically.

These words aroused a great degree of curiosity in the family circle, but Mr. Worthington would not satisfy them as to the reasons of his remark. He, however, offered Charley to take him into his office without any premium, and strongly urged him to insure a profession which would render him independent of all relatives. But the kind-hearted little man could not move Charley. He had golden visions floating upon him of wealth and renown, and even Helen, who unexpectedly sided with the solicitor, could not move him. At last, seeing that Young Wilful, as he termed him, would have his own way, though he would repent of it eventually, it was decided that the two sisters should go and live with him until they came of age, while Charley returned to college to complete his education, which the lawyer irreverently termed "stuffing his head with a parcel of Latin and Greek which wouldn't get him a dinner."

All that remained now was to decide what should become of Helen, and for this purpose it was absolutely necessary that a search should be made among the Captain's papers, in order to discover who she was, and what mode should be adopted to restore her to her friends. Mr. Worthington shook his head tremendously, and gave his frill an extra amount of oscillation when he heard this suggested by Charley; but the impetuous young man would not listen to

any advice about leaving well alone, and proceeded to his research.

Is there anything more lacerating to the feelings than searching through the garnered hoards of a parent—the discovery of secrets, mayhap, which destroy that reverence which we intuitively feel in a father, and prove that he was of the common clay after all? In the case of Captain Dashwood this was not fortunately the result of Charley's search, for what he found was calculated to increase the fondness he had ever felt for his father. There were bundles of letters, yellow with age and carefully endorsed, "From my father," "From my dear Jane," "From Charles." The latter contained the *naïve* history of schoolboy experiences, written in a bold round text, and full of bad English; but a father is never a fair judge of his son's grammar. Then came his first letters from college, full of glowing hopes, but gradually growing rarer, and containing appeals for money. Each of these was endorsed with the specific sum sent, and Charley was horrified at the amount. He had no idea that he could have spent so much, and, yet, never had anything to show for it.

Then came the remembrance thick upon him how affectionately his father had written to him; how he had told him that he would never begrudge what he spent, so long as he could supply it, and that his son spent it like a gentleman; the faint remonstrances which came after awhile, when his extravagance compelled him to make larger demands; and the hoping against hope the letters breathed. But the severest blow Charley sustained was in perusing the last letter his father had ever received in life. It was from an Oxford livery-stable keeper, inclosing an account for £150, and requesting payment, because young Mr. Dashwood's bills were mounting high, and he was afraid his father might be unaware of the fact. Could this have been the letter to which Jane had alluded in her frantic summons? Had his father been taken suddenly ill after receiving this confirmation of his fears about his son? But no, his father had been himself young, and knew that extravagance was natural to the Dashwoods. He would have paid the money, and said nothing to him about it. There must be some further mystery not yet discovered.

Charley had searched through the whole of the letters, but had not found those which he knew caused his father such anxiety and grief. He carefully examined the cabinet, and found, as he expected, a secret compartment—

a spring flew back, and a bundle of letters and a miniature became visible. He hurriedly seized them, and was about to tear off the envelope when he noticed written on it, "To be burnt unread on my decease." The sacred feeling of obedience was still strong upon him, and he reverently laid them on one side and took up the miniature. It was that of a lovely girl, and the features struck him as strangely familiar, though, for the moment, he could not recall the likeness to any one he knew. On the back was merely written, "Ida Trevanion to her beloved Charles." This, then, was the mystery which had gnawed at his father's vitals. What would he have given to read the letters that told the dismal tale; but it was forbidden, and he anxiously sought for further evidence.

His eye fell on a letter of very recent date. He ran through it, and found some clue, though a very vague one. The writer stated that her husband was dead, and that now she could summon her daughter to her side, and bestow on her all the concentrated love which she had been forbidden to display for years. She hoped that *he* would now do her justice, but self was his ruler. She had written to him, and trusted that his feelings would have changed for the better, and that he would be prepared to make requital for the past.

With this letter and the miniature in his hand Charles now proceeded to the parlour, and asked Mr. Worthington's advice. The first glance assured him that he was not mistaken as to the likeness he detected in the miniature. It was Helen's self, and the reference to the child assured him that his Helen was going to leave them.

But who was the mother? What heart could she have to leave her daughter so many years among strangers, and then so cruelly rend all the ties which bound her to the Dashwoods? There was a trace of affection in her letter which he did not like, and she expressed no thanks for his father's past kindness. She seemed to regard it as her due. Had Captain Dashwood fallen ill in consequence of the threatened loss of his beloved Helen? and could there be a closer connection between her and the Captain than they were yet aware of?

All this afforded subject for comment, and the remembrance of the mysterious stranger warned Charley that a crisis was at hand, and that the course of his love for Helen was not destined to run so smoothly as he had wished.

CHAPTER III.

A PARTING SCENE.

DURING the discussion which had been held between Charley and Mr. Worthington, the two girls had been walking in the garden with Helen, talking over their town life, and speculating as to when they should meet again. Helen was fixed in her resolve that she would no longer be a burden to her kind friends, and, if her mother forsook her, she was able to seek her own living as a governess.

It is strange, by the way, that our young girls, when ill-fortune overcomes them, always see a present prospect of relief in becoming governesses. They must be acquainted with all the misery attached to such a profession, and the peculiar wretchedness of being treated practically as menials, although their claim to gentle birth is allowed. They must give up every independent feeling, and be at the beck and call of a mistress who grudges them too often the food they eat, and safely treats them with ignominy which she dare not display to a servant. A governess is so dependent on the good will of her mistress—compelled to curry favour by acts of humiliation, in the knowledge that her future existence hangs on the caprice of her present owner (for on the character she receives will hinge all her prospect of further employment), she leads a truly wretched life, from which she seeks refuge too often, alas! in the ever-open ranks of the *traviati*.

My dear Helen was most peculiarly unfitted for a life of servitude of this nature. She possessed a strong character, which would enable her to carry out conscientiously any engagement she might form, but her native pride would not allow her to swerve one inch from the strict line of duty. I do not think she would have remained as governess for a week in any family belonging to society as at present constituted; but fortunately she was not aware of this, but looked the future boldly in the face, full of anticipation that she would be able to support herself honourably until such time as Charley would be able to make her his wife without her becoming a burden or tie upon him. She was quite prepared to wait were it for years. So guileless herself, she

did not for a moment harbour the thought that man is naturally fickle, and that delay might grow wearisome to her dear Charley.

She was, in truth, actuated by a strange mixture of antagonistic feelings. While she allowed that Charles would have to wait many years for the fruition of his and her own happiness, still she could not for a moment endure the idea of giving him his liberty again. She felt a foreboding that some awful discovery would destroy their promised happiness; yet she did not think that she was obliged, in consequence, to precipitate the rupture of their engagement. She clung to the idea the more firmly when it seemed most likely to slip from her possession.

Still my Helen was very considerably troubled by all these speculations, which were not at all calculated for a laughing girl of eighteen, and a settled gloom seemed to press on her brow, which no affectionate tentatives on the part of her sisters could dispel. At times she would strive to shake it off, and join heartily in the conversation about London delights, which the two girls never left off; but any casual allusion would recall the gloom, and her last state would be even worse than the first. They were walking for the twentieth time up and down the apple-tree walk, wondering when Charles would have finished his long consultation, and counting the hours which must elapse before they separated and quitted the old roof-tree for ever, when Jane, looking toward the garden wicket, uttered a cry of surprise.

"Why, there's a stranger at the gate! What can she want? She is looking so hard at us, and yet she doesn't seem to belong to the village."

Any further conjecture was checked by the stranger walking boldly up to them and saying:—

"I need not ask which is Miss Helen Mowbray; your likeness to your mother, my dear, is sufficient for me. Will you have the kindness to step here? I have a confidential communication to make to you. You need not be alarmed," she added, turning to Jane, who was trying to keep Helen back; "I shall not eat her, and if you have any doubts of me call Mr. Dashwood. He knows who I am."

And with a hyæna-like grin, meant to calm Miss Jane's apprehensions, but which only rendered them more acute, the stranger walked away to the end of the garden, followed by her unresisting victim. A lengthened conversation then ensued, Jane watching them closely the while, under some vague apprehension of she knew not what,

when the mysterious stranger handed Helen a letter, which she tore open and read eagerly. She wept bitterly on perusing it, but soon grew calmer, and then walked rapidly past the sisters, saying as she did so, "Yes, I must see Charles at once."

Helen did not stop till she reached the parlour, where the two gentlemen were still consulting as to whether she should obey the maternal mandate which they rightly expected would arrive shortly. When Helen entered the room they were not surprised, although Charley had hoped for more time. It was evident, therefore, that her mother was a woman of decision, and this augured ill for his own love matter.

"Charley—Mr. Worthington—the die is cast!" said Helen on entering the room; "my mother has sent for me, and I must obey her."

"Pooh, pooh!" ejaculated Mr. Worthington, "there's no such hurry. She has been long enough in sending for you, so she can afford to wait a little while. And pray what is your mother's name, if I may ask?"

"The letter is signed 'Ida Leblanc,' and is dated from Paris. Her waiting-maid has brought it, and wishes me to start by the mail train to-night, as my mother is so anxious to see me."

"Pooh, pooh! Leblanc? I ought to know that name. Let me see—O yes, of course. M. Leblanc wanted me to bring an action against—certainly, and I threatened to kick him out of the office. Well, my dear, I wish you joy, that's all; but if you'll take an old man's advice you'll not go to Paris, however much Lady—I mean Mrs. Leblanc may desire it. Come to London with me, and if you are so resolved to become a governess, I daresay I can get you a situation you'll like."

Now, it is a curious thing that Mr. Worthington should have twice tried to set young people against their lawful guardians, which seems to indicate some moral perversity. His character, however, stood high professionally and otherwise, so we can only assume that he had good reasons for his suggestions. But he was fated to fail in both instances. Helen's heart yearned for her unknown mother, and she was firm in her resolve to obey, whatever might await her. Mr. Worthington was very angry, and could only be pacified by a bottle of the old port. Helen left the room to make the necessary preparations, while Charley took an opportunity of whispering in her ear, "Meet me at the bower in

an hour's time." A gentle inclination of the head, and she was gone. During the hour, which seemed to Charley of unending length, Mr. Worthington began to thaw under the influence of the port, and a little judicious cross-examination would probably have drawn some valuable information from him; but Charley did not take advantage of the opportunity. He was lost in vague dreams about his future Oxford life, and the different position he would now assume as heir to a baronetcy, and the honour this would give him in the eyes of his creditors. Then his uncle could not live very long, and the £5000 would do to set him up in life. He would marry Helen and purchase a living, for he was now bent on domesticity, and really fancied, with his chastened feelings, that his proper vocation was the church. At length the clock struck five, and as Mr. Worthington was repeating, "Well, as I was saying, this Mounseer Leblanc —," he jumped up, and rushed from the room, greatly to that worthy gentleman's surprise.

Charley was first at the trysting place; but he had not been able to finish his cigar ere Helen joined him. Not having had any occasion to complain against the dilatoriness of woman, he was consequently in an excellent humour, and put on that patronising and condescending tone which we all are apt to assume when we know that a woman loves us. But Helen was in no humour to notice this. She had been crying bitterly, and the traces of the tears positively made her look ugly, which Charley was ungrateful enough to feel annoyed at, and begin some sarcastic remarks about women being able to cry at command; but Helen soon checked them by saying:—

"And do you think, Charles, that a parting like this ought not to make me sorrowful? I am going away from all I hold so dear, and who have been such true friends to me, to join a mother whom I cannot remember to have ever seen—perhaps to exchange happiness for misery; but it is my duty to obey," she added passionately.

"Come, come, my little woman, don't take it to heart so much. We shall not be parted for ever. I shall be of age soon, and then we shall be married of course."

"Oh, Charley, you don't know all! I have not told you yet about my last meeting with my guardian. He had just received that odious letter which was the cause of his illness, and he called me into his study. He told me that he was afraid we must soon part, and that his dear child would forget him, and then he would have nothing left

on earth to love him. He said that you were indulging in expenses beyond his means, and that you had been guilty of deceit toward him, which he felt bitterly after all his kindness to you; and then he made me wretched by adding, ‘Sharper than a serpent’s tooth is a thankless child.’ I spoke in your defence. I said that you loved him dearly; that you might be thoughtless, but I was ~~sure~~ you were not bad. He looked at me strangely, and then remarked, ‘And this, too! I did not expect that —’ He then seized me roughly by the hand and said, ‘Tell me, girl, you do not love that worthless boy of mine—other than as a brother I mean?’ He must have read in my blushing face a confirmation of his worst fears, for he gasped for words, and tried in vain to speak. A frightful convulsion crossed his face: he tottered and fell. It was that awful fit, from which he never recovered.”

“Well, dearest, but did he say nothing to explain the reason of this sudden attack?”

“Alas! he never spoke again. When on his dying bed he sent for me, and tried to speak. When it was in vain he motioned for writing materials, and a slate was brought him. He wrote faintly and with great difficulty, ‘You must not, dare not, mar —;’ and the pencil fell from his hands. A few hours later and he was taken from us.”

A silence ensued, during which Charley called to mind all the agonising thoughts which had occurred to him on the discovery of the miniature and the letter. Could it be possible that Helen was his sister? Could she be branded with the sin of a father, and was she the hidden offspring of illicit passion? But this could never be: his father had been so honourable and just in all his actions, that he would not have kept so dark a mystery concealed. He would have told him the truth, and not allowed him to grow up in love for Helen without a word of warning. Poor boy! he had not yet learned the truth that “conscience makes cowards of us all,” and that the best men are prone to neglect making compensation for wrongs they have done to society until the time has slipped away, and that fatal “too late” bars the door to repentance. But Charley was quite old enough to take refuge in a *mezzo terme*, which in his mind was represented by “wait and hope.” Hence he was the first to break the ominous silence.

“Well, dearest, I must confess that your story has startled

me. I can now understand that awful vision; but there may be secrets yet undisclosed which will materially affect our position. By all means, then, I advise your going to your mother; you may learn much from her as to the relation in which she stood to my poor father. We are both of us young, and time must elapse before our marriage can be accomplished. I have much to do. I must make my way in the world, and prepare a home for my dear little wife."

"Ah, Charles! I fear that our dreams will never be realised. The dead seem to rise between us and forbid our union. But one thing I will promise you, Charles—you shall ever be to me as a brother."

"Brother! What care I for so cold a relationship?" said the impetuous young man; then, with an outburst of natural selfishness, he added, "Promise me one thing, Helen—that, whatever may happen to separate us, you will never marry without my consent."

"I do heartily," said the poor young girl, offering herself a willing sacrifice to the egotism of man; "I will strive to conquer this feeling of depression, and hope that happier days may yet be in store for us. Take this ring," handing him the one Captain Dashwood had left her; "it cannot be in better keeping than yours. When you look upon it you will remember your poor Helen;" and here the natural out-let of tears checked her speech.

"Well, my dear girl, I feel that everything will turn out for the best, so give me a kiss, you little goose, and then go and finish your packing up."

With these words Charley lit another cigar, and walked up and down the field in deep thought. There is something so pleasant in knowing that the affections of a loving heart are irrevocably ours, that any obstacles which arise only heighten the piquancy of our sensations. Helen was all his own; he felt certain she would keep her word whatever might betide; so this lord of the creation felt not the slightest compunction at offering up this poor victim on the altar of his egotism, but rather fancied he was displaying his own disinterestedness by voluntarily entering into such an engagement.

My lady readers will probably find considerable fault with this love passage, because the most necessary ingredient of such a scene appears to be absent without (their) leave; but in my character of a truthful historiographer I am bound to present the reality. It would have been an

easy matter for me to have depicted a heart-breaking scene of lovers' tears and sighs, and a fine prospect of virtuous misery; but I am sorry to confess that such, or of such nature, was the parting interview between my hero and heroine. I trust, however, that before this veracious story terminates I may have an opportunity of piling up agony sufficient to satisfy the most insatiable devourer of circulating library *pabulum*.

By eight o'clock Helen had made all her preparations for departure. She had given some slight tokens of affection to the two girls, and received others in return. Of course there were many tears shed on this mournful occasion, but they were dashed with a spice of feminine envy, and, therefore, were not from a perennial fount. What swearing is to men crying is to women, and in all cases is decidedly more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Mr. Worthington was the last to take leave, and thrust a neat little pocket-book into Helen's hands.

"Pooh, pooh," he remarked as Helen tried to utter her thanks; "there's something in there which will be your truest friend when you find a stay in Paris impossible. And remember, girl, that as long as I live you will have a home to go to; so hide that pocket-book in your bosom, and don't let that foreign thing of a waiting-weuch have a peep at it, or else she'll impound it, mark my words."

And so they parted, the young lover manfully trying to choke his tears in a very guttural "God bless you," as he took leave of Helen at the railway station, and then gulping down his sorrow in a very stiff glass of brandy and water at the Red Lion; Helen in the meantime speeding to town by an express train, and employing the most ingenuous and yet most transparent devices to draw her companion into confidences. But there never was such an invaluable servant as Julie, so far as discretion was concerned. Nothing could be drawn from her save a parrot-like "All in good time," with which Helen was at last forced to put up, and resign herself to speculations about the future, which the present did not array in the brightest colours.

At Birchmere the requisite preparations were speedily made for the sale: the few articles selected which the family wished to retain as remembrances of the past, the rest were confided to the care of the country auctioneer. Then came a round of leave taking, a kind farewell given to the few poor pensioners of the family, and a trifle bestowed to soften down the parting. But Mr. Worthington was growing impa-

tient; he had a foreboding, he said, that things were not going on right at the office; he made repeated reference to an old proverb about the behaviour of the mice when the cat is absent; and his fidgety pooh-poohing drove every one to despair and frantic exertions to get the business settled at once, that he might return to town and relieve them from his restlessness.

The day of the sale arrived too soon for the family. It was bitter to reflect that cherished articles were going into the possession of strangers, and Jane had a desperate wordy warfare with the little lawyer before she could be induced to give up various *impedimenta*, which she fondly thought she could carry to London with her. The neighbours behaved kindly enough. They ran up the prices of many things merely for the sake of benefiting the orphans, and even old Miss Snaggs, who was popularly supposed not to have a good word to throw to a dog, and who visited every sale on principle without ever making a purchase, found herself, to her great surprise, owner of a full-grown plaster cast of Apollo, which she did not know what to do with, but eventually reconciled to propriety by having him dressed in an old suit of clothes of her uncle's, and putting him out in the garden as a sort of amateur scarecrow.

The very tradesmen of Birchmere unanimously expressed their regret at the breaking up of the old family. It is true that they would be considerable losers by it, for Captain Dashwood had not followed the fashion of the neighbouring gentry, and ordered everything from London. Still I will give them credit for a worthier motive. They really regretted the departure of the family for a day, and then fell to speculating what they should make out of the new owner, who was a retired tradesman from Wilmington.

The girls were soon settled in Mecklenburgh Square, where they received a hearty greeting from Mrs. Worthington, and speedily found themselves at home. There was only one son, who devoted his leisure hours to playing the flute, and was generally an estimable young man, much given to Exeter Hall concerts, and proud to conduct the young ladies to public places of amusement. Here I will leave them comfortably installed, and turn to the conduct of my hero, who certainly was not evidencing those strong principles of reform which he had vowed should henceforth be his guiding star.

In excuse it must be urged that he was for the first time his own master. He had more than £100 still left from his

gambling gains; so, instead of going down into Wales, as he said, to wait the remainder of the "long," and read hard, so soon as his sisters and Mr. Worthington were fairly under weigh he followed them to town, but took care to put at least three miles of solid brick and mortar between himself and Mecklenburgh Square. While they were attending Exeter Hall and other cheap popular amusements, he was becoming well known at the Star and Garter or the Crown and Sceptre. He made some extremely valuable female acquaintances, who were very willing to be his temporary companions, and he spent his time, in short, very agreeably, if not very profitably. Still he kept from play. He could not be induced to accompany his old chum, Harry Darcy, to that little crib in Jermyn Street, with its artfully contrived turning fireplace to burn the cards, and the spout to sink the dice into the sewers, when the police impertinently forced their way in. Really I think he is to be commended for displaying such self-control.

To make up for this deprivation, however, my young friend thought he was justified in indulging all the other vices incidental to young English gentlemen of birth and fortune. Perfectly ignorant of the value of money, as he never had been forced to earn any for himself, he scattered it broadcast, to reap a plentiful crop of headaches and anteprandial remorse, for which the only cure was bitter beer. By the time the long vacation was at an end his purse was much in the same condition, and after calling at his uncle's bankers, and finding that satisfactory arrangements had been made for the payment of his allowance, he started from London in company with Miss Rosalie St. Clair, the gem of a transpontine *balet*, whom he located at Abingdon, as a means to fill up the great gap caused in his heart by the absence of his Helen.

In this satisfactory company we will leave him, and see what that dear girl is doing while thinking her Charles is the pattern of fidelity, and renewing each night her mental vows of obeying his wishes.

CHAPTER IV.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

In a dirty fauteuil in a still dirtier bedroom sat Madame Ida Leblanc, dipping her roll in her coffee, and engaged in deep thought. To any one seeing her now it would have been difficult to recognise the well-conserved lady who dispensed her smiles and her suppers so bountifully to all strangers of fortune who visited Paris. In fact, Madame underwent a daily metamorphosis from the grub to the chrysalis. During the morning she rested from her labours, and, as soon as she had quitted her bed, sank into the arm-chair, which was comfortable, although dirty—perhaps because it was so. Here she smoked a cigarette, and read highly spiced and exceedingly improper novels. A suspicious bottle, bearing an etiquette “sarsaparilla,” but smelling strongly of brandy, suggested that the lady was subject to spasmodic attacks, which could only be relieved by applications to the beverage produced by that benefactor to humanity, Dr. Jacob Townsend.

But at the present moment Madamo Leblanc had more important matter on hand than novels. Her daughter had arrived that morning, but had not yet been admitted to see her. Julie had been cross-questioned closely as to the aspect of matters at Birchmere, and the report she gave was certainly deserving of reflection. The strong affection Helen felt for Charles Dashwood had not escaped her all-observant eyes, and her mistress was engaged in speculating on the probable result this discovery might produce for her own interests.

“Well, well,” she said, “perhaps it’s all for the best that the Captain died without learning my great secret, for now I can work on his son, and mould him to my purposes through his love for Helen. As for a marriage between them that’s all stuff and nonsense. My girl will look far higher than a mere baronet. Besides, I intend a foreign husband for her. But I shall be able to maintain a strong hold over her by my knowledge of her heart secrets, and her love will help to keep her out of mischief. She can’t be my daughter unless she tries to learn wisdom betimes. I

wonder whether I can make her of use, though, in our innocent little schemes for winning from the green young men? I am afraid she will be straitlaced: that's the worst of those English people, with their stupid notions of honour forsooth! Where should I be, I should like to know, if I had always studied honour?"

The expression of Madame Leblanc's face as she uttered the last pleasing sentiment was simply frightful, for it was evident that she did not believe in the truth of her statement. Try to hide it as they will, even the worst women regret their past sins at times, and would give worlds to recall them. But this soon wore off as the lady meditated some fresh scheme which seemed to amuse her excessively, for she clapped her hands, and began a loud laugh, which, however, produced such a violent fit of coughing that she became a ghastly object, and Julie flew in to her assistance. Madame Leblanc, however, angrily motioned her away, and, as soon as the fit was over, inquired,—

"Who's in the drawing-room?"

"Only Monsieur le Comte, milady."

"Where's Miss Helen?"

"She has gone out, milady."

"Good God! what will people think at seeing my daughter alone in the streets of Paris? Oh, we must break her of these English fashions; they will ruin everything. Her face is not to be gazed at so cheaply, for she is beautiful, Julie, *hein?*"

"Almost what I can remember milady at her age," was the arch reply.

"*Va-t-en, c'maille!*" milady responded with a playful tap, but evidently greatly delighted; "but, Julie, we must stop such proceedings. Send her here as soon as she comes in; or stay, she had better not come in here. Send Marie to dress me at once, and I will go into the drawing-room."

And so soon as Julie had quitted the room this strange compound of evil and an infinitesimal quantity of good fell on her knees, and began praying fervently before a crucifix. After a large amount of *culpa mea's, mea maxima culpa's*, she got up, apparently vastly relieved at having reconciled her conduct and her conscience, and proceeded to dress. This was rather a tedious operation, and while she is making herself up to be presentable, and venting her spite on poor Marie with the handle of a brush, we shall have time to turn over a page or two of her past life.

Ida Trevanion, in spite of her aristocratic name, was the

daughter of a tradesman, and a *belle* of country quarters in Ireland. On the death of her father she came in for some little money, and lived with a maiden aunt as a pattern of the strictest propriety. Beautiful as she was she was besieged by officers, many of them meaning in all sincerity to marry her; but she remained deaf to all their oaths. At length, however, she met with her match in Captain Dashwood, with whom she fell passionately in love. By him the passion was returned with equal earnestness and much greater sincerity. He would even have gone to the extreme of folly by marrying her at once, and running the risk of being disinherited, but she had prudently refused to join in any such mad scheme. Her caution kept her virtuous, and there seemed no prospect of their immediate marriage; when Captain Dashwood's battery was ordered to Canada.

A year later and Miss Trevanion carried out a long-desired wish to travel on the continent. She set out with her old aunt, and never returned. No one knew what had become of her, and she was not heard of for years, until she suddenly emerged in Paris as the wife of M. Leblanc, a notorious gambler and turf man. Many old friends flocked around her as soon as her *salons* were thrown open, and it was whispered that Ida Leblanc was not so cold to lovers' vows as Ida Trevanion had been. That is, however, so common a thing in Paris that none except the straitlaced English ladies paid any attention to the rumour, and, so long as M. Leblanc found no reason to complain, the public felt bound to close their eyes and ears. Madame's *salon* became notorious as being one of the pleasantest in Paris, and every young English milord made a point of procuring an introduction. High play was carried on there, but discreetly, as befits respectable society, and Madame was frequently found playing *écarté*, in which operation she could display an exquisitely-modelled arm. If a young man's eyes were so entranced that he did not notice how often she marked the king it was his own fault.

Several years passed away. Madame spent her summer at Baden, her winter at Paris, and, I have no doubt, laid by a very comfortable nest-egg. She was not one of your greedy adventurers who begrudge a small outlay, although certain of regaining it cent. per cent. On the contrary, her suppers were lavish, and the quantity of champagne consumed would have gladdened the heart of His Majesty of Prussia. M. Leblanc discreetly attended to his horses and bets, while

his wife managed the domestic affairs, and “all went merry as a marriage-bell.”

Two untoward events, however, happened almost simultaneously: the death of M. Leblanc, highly deplored by a numerous *clientèle* of jockeys and sharpers, and the gradual evanescence of Madame's beauty, from late hours and dissipation, which no cosmetics and rouge could entirely conceal. To supply the first gap was simple enough. M. le Comte de Cruchecassée was promoted to fill M. Leblanc's place without any tedious marital rights or connubial rites, and milady determined on recalling her daughter, whom she had allowed Captain Dashwood to bring up. She had heard great accounts of her beauty, and hoped that, by some judicious training of her own, she would soon be enabled to act as lure to young men, and prevent the very unpleasant necessity of shutting up the *salon*.

How Captain Dashwood had become guardian to her daughter was simple enough. After Ida Trevanion's first lapse from virtue (though events will possibly prove that it was the result of calculation rather than of confiding innocence), she had written a pitiable letter to her betrayed lover. She had described herself as utterly destitute, and compelled to leave her little daughter to the care of strangers. She asked nothing for herself; she deserved worse than she had already endured for deceiving the best and kindest of men; but her helpless child should not suffer. She felt confident that her Charles, whom she still loved so dearly, although an insurmountable barrier was raised between them, would not allow her Helen to starve. There was a good deal more in the same strain, and Captain Dashwood was foolish enough—for which I have no doubt my readers will blame him sincerely—to take compassion on the child of sorrow, and place her at the Minorites' Convent. But he committed two more foolish actions; he tried to conceal the circumstances from his wife, although, of course, she knew all about them, and drew her own conclusions, not very favourable to her husband's morality; and, secondly, when he brought the girl home, he neglected to explain matters to his son when at a proper age, which might have prevented much subsequent unhappiness. Although so fond of Helen, as a portrait of her mother, to whom he was still madly attached with all the concentrated strength of a first love, his pride would not allow him to think of a marriage between her and Charles; and the knowledge of their attachment, added to the thought that his

Helen would be taken from him, and the last tie broken which bound him to her mother, brought on that fatal illness which has left the family matters in their present unsatisfactory condition.

By this time Madame has completed her toilette, and, wrapping a very magnificent Cashmere shawl about her, she prepares to leave the bedroom. It is wonderful what effect dress and attention have on some people, for milady is hardly to be recognised for the dingy, dowdy woman we lately saw reclining in the fauteuil. A modest grey moiré antique dress, trimmed with perfect taste, and apparently so simple, although it had cost some thousands of francs, harmonised admirably with her somewhat worn countenance, and the rouge had been laid on with a master hand. She must not frighten Helen at starting, and was prepared to play the part of a high-bred English mother.

On entering the *salon* the first object that presented itself was Monsieur le Comte lounging on a sofa, and tapping his boot-heel with a gold-mounted riding cane. He jumped up with great gallantry on the lady's appearance, and was going to kiss her cheek, but was prevented by an almost imperceptible gesture, which proved how admirably he had been trained.

"No, my friend, we must be cautious; we must not frighten the child just at present. I will make her regard many things as resulting from foreign manners and fashions; but you and I must be careful that she notices nothing between us which can give rise to conjecture. Her eyes will be opened only too soon I am afraid."

The Count bowed profoundly and resumed his seat, while the lady continued:—

"I am afraid that Helen will be profoundly *gauche* for the present, and will talk French with a horrid English accent. I shall look to you, my dear Count, to correct these failings. For the present our family circle must be restricted. There are but few young men of wealth in Paris, and I would not throw her beauty away on the lower classes. I depend on her to restore the fortunes of my house; and if she be so handsome as I am told, and so like what her mother was at her age"—and here the lady gave a glance, half smiling, half mournful, at the mirror—"I entertain no fear as to her success."

The Count bowed again, while the lady paused to draw breath, and she then continued:—

"What I shall do with her I cannot yet decide. Perhaps

or you will never create the sensation I desire. *Gauche comme une Anglaise* must not be said about my daughter. But I am tired now; go to Julie, my love. She will inspect your wardrobe, and give the requisite instructions to the dressmaker, for I suppose you have nothing fit to wear in our society."

So saying, and languidly extending her hand for her daughter to kiss, Madame Leblanc fell back in her cushions with a sweet smile of satisfaction at the consciousness that she had fulfilled her duty perfectly as a mother. The door was hardly closed before she turned triumphantly to the Count and exclaimed,—

"Well, old friend, she will do, will she not? I am never deceived in my estimate of a woman. I feel sure that she will obtain more than a *succès d'estime*. She will create a perfect excitement among our young men. But now to prepare for action. You, my dear Count, must go and give a flaming account of her to all your friends, and bid Sir Willoughby to come to me at once. Not a moment must be wasted. We must work upon her while she is lost in astonishment at her new mode of life, and then it will be an easy task to bring her over to my views. We shall dine at six. Au revoir."

The Count punctually fulfilled his mission as far as Sir Willoughby was concerned, and that gentleman soon appeared to lay "the evidence of his devotion at the feet of the fair widow," as he gallantly remarked. Sir Willoughby Crofton was one of a band of honourable men well known on the continent. He had been the proprietor of a large estate and of a long rent-roll when he came of age, but had soon lost them by a fatal passion for play. He had gone down the various rungs of the social ladder, and had now degraded into a bonnet at Madame Leblanc's hell. But even she only kept him out of charity, and on account of his old name, which was an excellent decoy for the Smiths and Browns, who dearly love a lord; otherwise he was useless, for he was given to the bottle, and his right hand had forgotten its cunning; but in the morning no trace of this was perceptible except on very close observation. He was the picture of a perfect English gentleman—neat, closely shaven, and fond of a blue coat with bright gilt buttons. Even those who were aware of his character were indulgent to him, on the principle that he was nobody's enemy but his own. Hence was he now summoned to milady's confidence.

" You know, I believe, the young Marquis of Lancing. He is staying at the Hôtel Windsor. He arrived the day before yesterday," she added, after a reference to an ivory *carnet*. " I shall expect you to bring him here to-morrow night. Tell him, as an inducement, that you can show him the loveliest woman in Paris. Oh, no ! I do not mean myself, but my daughter, who has just arrived from England. That bait will be sure to tempt him. And, Sir Willoughby, if you bring him you will find Mr. Smoothley here, and you can play *écarté* with him all night if you like. I had reserved him for myself, but I shall not play at present; and I cannot entrust him to safer hands than those of my most amiable coadjutor."

The Baronet muttered his thanks and brightened up perceptibly at the prospect; for, as he confessed, his finances were running rather low, and his agent had unaccountably omitted to remit him his rents. He was perfectly well aware that milady knew that any rents he continued to receive must be from the moon, but in decent society these little harmless apologies are requisite; so Madame Leblanc begged to be allowed to be his banker, and Sir Willoughby quitted the house by twenty louis richer than when he entered it. These little expenses she regarded as bad debts, which she made her good customers pay with compound interest.

The remainder of the morning was spent by the lady in receiving various visitors, who professed to pay a morning call, and imparted valuable information at the same time about strangers who had arrived in Paris. They were of every description, from a marquis of the *vieille souche* down to a little abbé, who took care of her soul, and had an extraordinary knack at inventing new tricks with the cards. All gave their information, and all were variously rewarded; some with money, others with gracious smiles and invitations to dinner. At length, when the roll call seemed to be exhausted, there came a discreet system of taps at the outer door, and Madame jumped up and opened it with a profusion of bows.

The gentleman who entered was apparently the most harmless visitor of the number. Nothing about him revealed the fact that Madame's luxurious existence depended on him; but it was so. He was an official of high standing in the secret police, and received a percentage on all the earnings of Madame Leblanc. As soon as he had seated himself on the sofa close to Madame's side, he produced a

I may reserve her for a wealthy marriage ; and, in that case, I need not tell you, Count, this house must be given up. Nay, do not look alarmed," she added laughingly, on noticing the Count's glance of blank dismay; " it would not be for long. As soon as my daughter was settled I should return to my old mode of life, which possesses extraordinary fascination for me. However, there will be no harm in her seeing a little of our society : it will put her on her guard, and her novitiate will soon be over. Before all, she must be a woman of the world, and not, like her foolish mother, yield to the emotions of her heart. If I had but had such a mother as she has to guide me through the quicksands of life, I should not be the wreck I am now."

" And yet, Madame, it is a wreck which would tempt the cupidity of many," said the Count with a devouring glance.

" *Basta!* we have no time now for compliments ; besides, we know each other too well. Reserve them for Mdlle. de la Fourberie, to whom I saw you paying such devoted attention the other night. Nay, do not think I am jealous ; I give you full leave to excite a sensation where you can. You remember the conditions of our treaty : full liberty of action for the high contracting powers, and a strict maintenance of the *status quo ante*. I even give you entire liberty to try your powers of captivation on Helen ; it will prove a good lesson for her ; but remember," she added with a menacing finger, " it must be in all honesty. I can be a dangerous enemy, and I doubt whether Jacques Crétaut would like to drive me to bay. You see I know more about you, my dear Count, than you supposed. I like to be acquainted with all my friends' amiable weaknesses. It is surprising what good stead they stand me in. But hush, here comes my daughter ;" and the amiable lady, falling back on the sofa, assumed a stereotyped smile, while the Count, utterly overwhelmed by her knowledge of himself, walked to a window, and looked moodily out.

" Kiss me, my child," said Madame Leblanc, affectionately offering her cheek to Helen ; " I have longed for this moment of happiness, which has been too long delayed. But tell me, how was it that you have been abroad so early and alone ? "

Poor Helen ! this was a sad falling off from her ideal dreams of a mother. She had yearned for this moment of meeting ; she would have rushed into her mother's bedroom that morning had not the ever-watchful Julie prevented her ; and she had sought some relief for her overwrought

feelings by wandering in the Tuileries gardens, which could be seen, with their delicious verdure and gaily dressed groups, from the drawing-room windows.

"This must not occur again, *ma chère*," said the mother with a smile, as she surveyed her daughter's charming face, suffused with blushes at the rude glances which the Count bestowed on her. "Such beauty as yours must not be left unprotected in the streets of Paris. Monsieur le Comte will be proud to be your companion when you desire fresh air."

And she pointed to the gentleman as if to a poodle, and he carried out the illusion by fondling and dancing round poor Helen in a manner expressive of his delight at being her cavalier, while his shrugs and grimaces were perfectly astounding to the pure English girl.

"And now tell me, dearest, how have you left the amiable family at Birchmere? All well, I trust. The death of poor Captain Dashwood must have been a sad blow. Well, I daresay we can make up for your affliction. And your adorable Charles—Nay, do not blush; I know all about it."

"Oh, mother!" was all Helen could gasp out, so outraged did she feel at having her heart secrets so rudely laid bare before a stranger.

"Nonsense, little babe," Madame went on; "the Count is the friend of the family. I have no secrets from him, and, for heaven's sake, drop that horrid 'mother. Surely we need not let all the world know what relationship exists between us. If you are already provided with a husband, I have not given up all hopes of a successor to M. Leblanc, and such a daughter as yourself will make people fancy me an old woman."

Helen was more and more amazed at the manner in which her mother talked to her. Fortunately, she could not understand one half of her allusions, but still she felt instinctively that there was something wrong. She had been brought up in such an inartificial manner that she could not realise the fact of there being mothers who feel annoyed at their daughters' age. It is evident that she had much yet to learn—equally evident that she had come to the best school to learn how to pluck the bitter fruit of the tree of knowledge. But her mother soon began again:—

"I need not ask you what your French accent is. It must be deplorable; but we can remedy that by means of masters. Your *pose*, too, is atrocious. You must be drilled,

pocket-book, and began whispering in that subdued tone peculiar to detectives, who seem to deaden their very tongues in list.

"Let me see, on Monday you gained 4000 francs from Colonel la Grange, and 370 francs from Alphonse Delamotte. By the way, you must give that young man a hint not to come here too often; his *gredin* of a father has been complaining to the police that you keep a common gambling-house, and seduce unwary students to play. I stopped the inquiry; but you must be careful at present. Then on Wednesday Monsieur Green, your compatriot, lost 1745 francs to you, without counting eighteen louis d'ors to that Count of yours: total, 6120 francs, of which 612 are my share. Many thanks, Madame; I see our accounts exactly tally."

"I have often felt surprised at the accuracy of your information, although you appear so rarely here."

"Have you?" he replied, with a comic glance of surprise; "it is very simple. Although I perfectly believe in your honour, Madame, still you might make mistakes unintentionally, which would desolate me. I should be unworthy of the exalted post I hold under His Majesty if I could not discover what goes on in a *salon* so distinguished as yours. You will pardon my warning about that Alphonse; but our interests might be gravely compromised. A thousand thanks, Madame."

Aud he was gone as mysteriously as he had appeared. With his departure a sudden change came over Madame Leblanc: all her energy appeared to have deserted her, and she sank back on the sofa perfectly helpless. She touched a handbell on the neighbouring table, and Julie glided in like a shadow with a little bottle, from which she poured several drops of a dark liquid on a lump of sugar, which diffused a sickening smell of laudanum through the room. Her mistress ate the sugar, and then fell back on the sofa, heart-wearied and exhausted by the constant strain to which her nerves were subjected.

In the meanwhile, Helen was holding very important conferences with the *modiste* and the waiting-maid, and I am obliged to allow that, although she was essentially a strong-minded girl (not in the Bloomerian sense of the term), her feminine vanity was considerably excited by the gay patterns exposed before her. What she would want with half a dozen new dinner dresses at once was a profound mystery to her; but she wisely trusted to Julie, feeling confident

that the omniscient waiting-maid was the best judge in such matters.

As soon as this business was settled she retired to her bedroom, which was a pattern of neatness and propriety, forming a striking contrast with her mother's slatternly chamber, and began writing an interminable letter to her Charles, crossed and re-crossed till it would require a lover's microscopic eyes to decipher it. This ended, she prepared for dinner, and felt rather ashamed of her dress, which seemed to her very plebeian after the recent display. However, she comforted herself with the reflection that they should dine strictly *en famille*. The evening terminated with a visit to the Opéra Comique, and, although Helen received strict injunctions to keep well back in the box, and not let herself be seen, still she saw enough to tell her that there were less pleasant places than Paris in the world.

As for the unfortunate letter, it was truly a love's labour lost: it wandered about the country after Charley, and at length reached him one fine morning, just after he had returned to his lodgings with the morning's milk. Sick and dizzy when he arose, and found it lying on his table, he tried to make it out, and then angrily threw it from him. In the afternoon it was confiscated by the maid of all work when she tidied the room by making confusion worse confounded, and formed the subject of her investigations over her supper beer. After various migrations from rag shops to buttermen it at length appeared in a cheap periodical, in the midst of a thrilling tale of love and madness. As I daresay it was as absurd as the majority of young ladies' love letters, I am only glad that the poor devil of an author got hold of it while encircling a pat of butter, and was enabled to convert it into a comforting beef steak and pot of porter.

CHAPTER V.

DEMI-MONDE.

M. ALEXANDRE DUMAS, jun., one of those rare instances in literature when a clever father has been surpassed by a cleverer son, owes much of his popularity and a large proportion of his fortune to a comedy well known by the title of the *Demi-monde*, in which he brands with the hot iron of

his sarcastic powers a class of women who are becoming dangerous nuisances and pests to society in Paris. They arrogate to themselves the powers of Aspasia, without possessing one tithe of her ability; but ministers are happy to sit at their feet, and discuss state policy and state secrets in their presence. Sedate boursemen have yielded to the wiles of these Phrynes, and grant them a share of their gains. In fact, they had become an *imperium in imperio*, and had begun to elbow respectable women off the *trottoir* of society. The evil was beginning to grow unendurable, and M. Dumas, like a modern Curtius, leaped into the breach, prepared to die by the needle points of his offended countrywomen.

Strange to say, the ladies were not at all annoyed at this bitter attack upon them, and, while the *pêches à quinze sous* passed into a proverb, these estimable ladies thronged to the theatre, and applauded frenetically this bitter sarcasm on themselves. The age must be in truth impure when the *castigat ridendo mores* fails so entirely of its effect.

At the time of which I am writing, however, these ladies had not begun to interfere in state matters. They were certainly given to dabble in the funds, but the universal corruption which branded the later years of Louis Philippe's reign rendered this very venial. It was reserved for his successor to find that golden era in which adventurers alone can prosper, and, even when rogues fall out, honest men do not get their due.

The Napoleon of peace, as the poor old king was flatteringly termed, although later events proved that his policy was anything but Napoleonic, and had the Bourbon curse corrupting it at the base, thought that the universal canker which preyed on society must be humoured. He would not apply any violent cautery, for he imagined that his throne was most secure when the people were engaged in intrigue. Hence such *salons* as Madame Leblanc's flourished magnificently, and persons were present at her *soirées* whose names gave her stability. It was naturally assumed that, when dukes and marquises did not hesitate to attend her *petits soupers*, and pay her for the entertainment in judicious flattery, the middle classes might safely accept her invitations. Hence her rooms were always crowded on reception nights, and nothing revealed outwardly the rottenness of the system on which the splendid fabric was raised.

But, though so successful as regarded the male portion of Parisian society, Madame Leblanc was often sadly in a dilemma as to the class from which to select her feminine

guests. Somehow or other, any lady who went once was always engaged elsewhere when she received a second invitation, and, though everything was done with a proper regard to the *bienséances* of fashionable life, that innate instinct of women which may be regarded as a sixth sense led them to shun Madame Leblanc's rooms so long as they had any regard for their character.

Madame Leblanc had struggled long and vigorously against this moral repulsion. She was not accustomed to acknowledge defeat, and she made the most tremendous exertions to overcome the scruples of her lady friends. At length, however, the victor of a hundred fights was forced to confess to herself that she must move the first step down the ladder. For her schemes the presence of women was an absolute necessity. Young men of fortune would not visit her for the sake of play alone; but given the attraction of young and pretty women, and the rest would follow in the natural order of things. Hence she was compelled to seek recruits among the widows of the grand army; and her rooms soon resounded once more to the merry laugh of charming women, and the shares of the Leblanc bank went up to a premium.

It was surprising with what alacrity countesses and baronesses accepted the invitations issued by Madame. They had no false pride about associating with the wife of a turf man, and condescended to drink the champagne, which she dispensed so liberally, with charming unanimity. After all, perhaps, they answered the purpose better than ladies of the higher classes; and even supposing they were not the chosen vessels of society, and might be flawed slightly, still the crack was so cleverly concealed by flowers and wreaths, that he would be a churl indeed who stopped to examine them too closely. It is true that the conversation became at times as sparkling as the champagne, and if indulged in to excess produced a moral headache; but the effect soon passed off, and all joined in praising the luscious flavour which distinguished both.

On the night when Madame Leblanc intended to open the first sap in the heart of the susceptible Marquis of Lancing but few ladies were invited, and those chiefly selected as foils to Helen. Madame would have been an excellent *bouquet* composer, if we may judge from the talent she displayed in assorting the flowers which were to serve as a setting to her own lovely garden rose. But she did not trust to Helen's beauty alone: all that art could supply to

bring out her beauty was lavishly employed, and the mother was forced to confess that Helen was more lovely than she had herself been in the days of her county ball triumphs.

No preparations were made in the *salon* for the expected guests further than that the grand chandelier was lighted. Madame was too good a judge to employ gas; she knew that very few complexions could stand such a glaring trial; and, besides, Helen had too much of the English girl still about her, in the shape of rosy cheeks and stray freckles. But the wax candles were not spared; they cast a glorious light over the room, and brought out in strong relief the exquisite and yet so simple arrangements which characterise French drawing-rooms. Madame Leblanc, I must give her the credit to say, was a thorough Frenchwoman as regarded taste, and improved it by a due admixture of English solidity.

The first guest to arrive was a grey-headed old Frenchman, who had been an émigré during the revolution, and still talked English from predilection. He was an amiable old man, slightly a *frondeur* with the present government, but not so foolish as to break with it and lose a small appointment he held. He was much struck with Helen, whom Madame Leblanc introduced as her daughter by her first husband, Colonel Mowbray, and relieved her feeling of bashfulness by talking to her in English. Of course he paid her very florid compliments, or he would have been false to his country; but he was a positive relief to Helen after that odious Count, who would look at her so fixedly and be so distressingly polite.

By degrees the rooms filled; some of the gentlemen began playing, while others surrounded the ladies; and Helen, to her great regret, was summoned from the side of the amusing old gentleman to be introduced to the lion of the evening, Milord Lancing. There was nothing very alarming about him, however. He was a delicate, boyish-looking man, who seemed not to have long given up toffy, and his conversation was of that sweet insipid character which is apparently the predominant feature of the British aristocracy. It was very evident that he was one of those almond tumblers of society, whose bills have grown so soft by in-and-in breeding that they cannot pick up their own peas, but have to be spoon-fed.

Still the Marquis displayed his taste by an evident admiration of Helen, and had Charley been present I do not think he would have been pleased at the affectionate manner in

which Helen responded to him. She was to be pardoned ; the poor girl had never spoken to a real lord before, and she yielded unconsciously to that besetting admiration for titles which is peculiar to every "man and a Briton." Even if he did appear very troubled with his *r's*, and give way to an amiable lisp, which rendered his remarks rather more difficult to follow than those of a two years' child, still that was pardonable : it was not to be expected that a nobleman should trouble himself about common English.

After some lengthened conversation, for which Helen supplied the majority of material, some of the ladies proceeded to the pianoforte, and began singing some of those magnificent bravuras which seem to a vulgar mind composed of an interminable series of *oh's* and *ah's*. After awhile some clever songs succeeded, not in the purest taste, but which the gentlemen applauded somewhat noisily. Fortunately Helen was not sufficient French scholar to understand them. The Marquis then pressed Helen to sing, and without any affectation she allowed him to conduct her to the piano, where she sang one of those quaint old English ballads which are so charming, because they are heard so rarely in the present age and mania for Verdi and the hermaphrodite Italian school.

Helen was endowed by nature with a magnificent organ — a pure contralto—which she employed in the way designed, and did not spoil by a variety of roulades and vocal fireworks. Hence her singing after the Frenchwomen was like listening to darling Louisa Pyne after having your tympanum pierced by Madame Squallini's head falsetto, or, to use a somewhat forced metaphor which is not my own, by letting in the fresh forest air into a room which is impregnated with musk. The French countesses shrugged their shoulders, and exchanged glances of pity at such an uncultivated voice; but Madame Leblanc was delighted at discovering this new element in her daughter, and still more at the visible impression she had made on the Marquis.

In short, the evening went off admirably. The Marquis retired at an early hour, expressing a wish that he might be permitted to call and inquire after Miss Mowbray's health ; and after this tremendous exertion on his part he went off to join a party of young men, and be one of the wildest boon companions in some very improper society, the principal incentive to mischief being Ma'mselle Coralie, of the Grand Ballet. If the young man had been acquainted with all the secrets of Madame Leblanc's establishment he might

have satisfied his craving for excitement at a very much cheaper rate, which would have gratified him extremely; for, though he loved pleasure, he was considerably more fond of money.

As soon as Helen had retired for the night, and the more respectable of the guests had also left, Madame Leblanc's *salon* became the scene of a wild orgie. The most exquisite little supper was served up, and under the influence of the champagne the *ci-devant* countesses became veritable daughters of Eve. Several literary Bohemians dropped in at a late hour, and there was a flashing encounter of wit and exchange of *quiproquos*, which would have gladdened the heart of a certain Lawrence Sterne if he could have returned for a time to this upper world and listened to them; of course I mean in an intangible form, for, as an English divine, he would have been forced to blush at many of the sallies.

Ah me! those Paris suppers are very pleasant things, the more pleasant, perhaps, because we know them to be wrong; but there is something so piquant in seeing women who move in respectable society throw off the trammels of conventionality and become true women for the nonce, ready to give and take, and prepared to defend themselves against all comers in the war of wit. They want no champions to take their part; the champagne supplies them with abundant stores of missiles, and they fling them recklessly abroad, careless where they strike home, or if they hit their dearest friend.

At length, *de guerre lasses*, and worn out with unextinguishable laughter, the ladies prepared to retire. Their *coupés* had been awaiting them at the door, and they took an amiable farewell of their hostess. They knew perfectly well when they should leave the scene of operations, and allow Madame to draw the expenses from those of her male guests whom she had chosen to be the paymasters. Sir Willoughby had not met with his usual success while engaged with Mr. Smoothley, owing to an extra bottle of wine he had imbibed at dinner: in short, he had been cleaned out, and had taken a sullen revenge on the champagne; so Madame selected Mr. Smoothley as the pre-destined victim, and he willingly assented to her proposition that they should play one game of *écarté* prior to the dispersion of the guests.

The stakes were very moderate at starting, only five louis d'ors, and Mr. Smoothley won the first game in a

canter. Madame then rose as if to break off, but Mr. Smoothley was far too gallant; he could not think of refusing Madame her revenge, and they went on playing double or quits. It is needless for me to delay with the description of the artful means employed to rook him: he was plied with champagne, while the Count signalled every trump he had in his hand. He lost £40, being all the money he had in his purse, and gave an IOU for £100 more, when Madame graciously let him off any further loss, and he was politely bowed out. It was not a bad evening's work, take it on the whole, and I fancy I should not mind supplying supper and champagne at the same rate for a succession of nights.

At length Madame and the Count were left alone in the *salon*, and they had a lengthened conversation on the subject of the evening's success. Madame harped on the circumstance of the police agent being so intimately acquainted with all that went on in her rooms, and evinced an ardent desire to detect the spy, while the Count expressed his strong indignation at such villainy, and, indeed, almost betrayed himself by his superabundant energy. He too soon left, and on the stairs met Julie, with whom he held a hurried conversation, which terminated in his giving her a very affectionate kiss and several louis d'ors, after which the invaluable waiting-maid returned to wait on milady, and see her safely to bed.

But Madame was too much excited to sleep, so, after dismissing her ministering spirit, she walked up to a scrutoire, and took out a bundle of papers, which she carefully examined. A flush of triumph suffused her features as she at length took up a marriage certificate and muttered, "This will revenge me yet. If Helen win the heart of that young fool this will prove her legitimacy, and her proud father will be brought to kneel in the dust before me. Pah! how I hate him! Were he drowning at this moment, and I could save him by stretching out my hand, I would not do it," and, with this charitable utterance of her thoughts, she went into the next room and prepared for bed. She took another dose of her poisonous narcotic, and soon fell into a deep stertorous sleep.

Not long, and the door of the anteroom again opened; the Count and Julie entered with a dark lantern; they held a whispered consultation, and then the Count put on a mask and drew a sharp Corsican stiletto. He glided up to the bed, and carefully unshaded his lantern; but he

had no need to feel any apprehension of being detected : Madame Leblanc slept a sleep worthy of the righteous. He groped under her pillow for the keys, which soon met his hand, and he proceeded noiselessly to the scrutoire. This he opened with a practised hand, not a sound betraying his movements. It was evidently not the first time he had rifled such stores ; but on this occasion his object was not plunder apparently, for he counted several bank notes with a ravenous eye, but then returned them to their place. He soon pounced upon the bundle of papers which Madame had been so recently examining, and, holding his knife between his teeth, he commenced turning them over carefully, and handing them to his companion for inspection. At last his eye fell on the marriage certificate, and he hissed,—

“ Yes, Julie, your tale is right. That pale-faced English girl is truly the lawful daughter of milord ; she will be a prize worth gaining, and she must be mine. Then, Julie, we shall be rich, and we can return to our beloved Corsica. But these, too, must be mine—all this money which the old fool stores up and begrudges her faithful Count—ha ! ha ! but not now. I must make sure of the English girl first ; then, then, Julie, we will plunder this store. How milady will rave to find that her invaluable Julie has robbed her of all ! ”

He then restored the papers to their receptacle, and carefully closed the scrutoire. With uplifted knife he again approached the bed to secrete the keys beneath the pillow. At this moment Madame Leblanc moved restlessly, as the light gleamed across her eyes from the blade of the knife. Had she opened her eyes her fate would have been irrevocably sealed ; but a merciful Providence interposed. She fell back into her old position, and time was granted her to repent her grievous and manifold sins. Unfortunately she never knew, in this world at least, how near she had been to death’s door ; had she done so she might have reflected on the misery to which she was devoting her daughter, and have thought that rank was dearly purchased at the price of a loving heart.

The Count and his accomplice retired, and silence fell upon the house. All was hushed in deep sleep, except that Helen was uttering in her dreams prayers for her dear Charles, and fancying somehow that he was the Marquis of Lancing.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GENTLEMAN COMMONER.

ON his second appearance at Oxford my hero made his *début* in a far more exalted position. By the express wish of his uncle he donned the silk gown and velvet cap of the gentleman commoner, and gave up the exhibition to be battled for on the paper field by some poor devils who had not such brilliant expectations as himself. In truth, Charley was recommencing life under very flattering auspices. He regarded himself as his uncle's rightful heir, and went into profound mental calculations as to the amount the old gentleman had probably saved out of his diplomatic pickings, which, added to the £20,000 which Sir Amyas had inherited from his father, would enable my young friend, as he thought, to play his part befittingly in that station of life to which, &c.

To a young gentleman of Charles' peculiar disposition, who was fond of ostentation, and an aristocrat *pur sang* in his tastes and habits, the change which he now underwent was delightful in the extreme. Oxford is essentially the home of snobbism, and nowhere is it so true "that to him who has much, much will be forgiven." An intelligent foreigner would suppose that where all are gentlemen by education there could be no class distinction possible, and that the young men would of themselves pull down any social barrier which the flunkeyism of dons had established. But he would lie under a grievous mistake; and, though he might have heard of university reform, the sight of that "peculiar institution" which is the disgrace of Christ-church—the adherence to the old system of servitors, who are branded as social Pariahs because they happen to be poor—would soon enlighten him as to the fact that Napoleon the Great uttered a profound truth when he designated us as a nation of shopkeepers. The spirit of the age, which has effected so much social improvement, and will even yet enable Jews to sit in Parliament, is powerless at Oxford, and the stolid adherence to old-world regulations which compels the servitors to be distinguished from the rest of the students by having no tassels to their caps, is worthy of

the age when Jews were forced to wear yellow gaberdines, and to which the Earl of Derby would so much like us to revert.

But even in this instance I am happy to say a slight sacrifice has been made to public opinion. The servitors are allowed, by a sort of tacit license, to wear "beaver" whenever they are obliged to appear in the public streets, and the proctors are sufficiently enlightened not to sconce them for this infringement of their laws. Were I to write a volume on the subject, I could not supply a better argument than this to prove the utter fallacy of exceptional laws in what should be essentially a republican institution, where all men are, or should be, equal in the sight of the schools, and talent ought to be the sole criterion by which a man's merits should be gauged. But money is the god to which all fall down and worship at Oxford, and, so long as that is the case, so long will gentlemen commoners and servitors exist side by side, but never amalgamate. Common sense has already decided the question in the university, and, if paterfamilias would like to know the estimation in which the silk gowns and velvet caps are held in Oxford, let him ask his son, the scholar, what is the name by which an empty bottle is generically known at a wine party.

But these were speculations into which Charley did not enter; he calmly took the goods the gods provided, and did not stop to inquire by what peculiar merits of his own they had fallen to his lot. He dined at the high table, and reverently laughed at the jests of the rather greasy dons, for "gentle dulness always loves a jest." By this Jesuitic conduct he soon grew in their good graces, and began to be regarded as a very sensible young man, of whom the college expected much. He took his wine in the common room, and duly appreciated the fine old port which a generation of bursars had spent their otherwise useless years in collecting; in short, he was a model gentleman commoner.

In return for this slight exertion on his part the dons behaved to him with remarkable clemency. He could cut chapels when he pleased, or whenever a sick headache fixed him to his bed. His "æger" was never examined into, and if a college tutor, on returning from his constitutional ride, happened to meet Charley returning home in pink from a run with the hounds, he discreetly went on the other side, and took no notice of him; for he charitably supposed that the young man's doctor had recommended violent equitation as the best remedy for his complaint.

At lectures, when he thought proper to make his appearance, my hero was never troubled to translate any difficult passage by which he would betray his ignorance; he put on the college tutor as his private coach, and was thus always fully prepared for "collections," through which he passed with credit. My young friend was certainly wise in his generation, and, if he benefited by the system of hypocrisy which surrounded him, I do not think he is to be severely blamed for it. Now and then it is true that he had an imposition allotted to him for some gross breach of college discipline, but it was perfectly well known that he would pay three half-crowns, and receive it in time from the bookseller. A solemn farce was then enacted: he would hand it in, the tutor would express his sincere regret at having been forced to such an unpleasant recourse, and the imposition would be solemnly burned without inspection, for that would have betrayed the imposture, and led to an unpleasantness which all parties equally desired to avoid.

What with steeple-chases, drag-hunts, and frequent visits to Abingdon, it may be assumed that my hero did not trouble himself much about reading. Like a high-spirited youth he left that to the poor fellows who were obliged to do so; and I may here remark that his visions of a country living were dissipated by the first hot blast of college indulgence. He thought it unworthy of his talents to bury himself in some obscure rectory, and only emerge from his nonentity for a brief period by publishing a volume of sermons or a treatise on a Greek particle, which would be invaluable to the butterman, but to him alone, and in this he was encouraged by all he saw around him. The dons themselves were too wise to exchange their lettered ease for the active life and possible privations of a parsonage; they were wrapped up in self and old port, and, though acting up to the letter of monastic reclusion, they were far from obeying its spirit. They fed no paupers at their gate; they did nothing to promote education, and relieve the ineffable misery of the lower classes; they were thorough drones, lazily living on the stores piled up for them by others, and only evidenced their existence by an irate buzzing when the Town Council tried to bring them under the action of the Poor-law Commission.

The tradesmen, too, did their share to augment Charley's self-sufficiency; he was unanimously decreed to be the possessor of a very fine and matured taste, and every picture which arrived for sale was submitted to his ordeal. His

rooms were soon encumbered by a variety of very valuable engravings, principally of the High Church school. "Stratford going to Execution," "Charles the Martyr in the Guard-room," an old woodcut of that ecclesiastical Jeffreys, Archbishop Laud, of sanguinary memory—such were some of the engravings which were promoted to fill the place of the "Pets of the Ballet" and celebrated racers, which had formerly disfigured his walls. This was a step in a better direction, and I am not inclined to cavil with him for it; but, while the ballet girls quitted the room, the individual star retained her lodgings at Abingdon, and that was culpable, and utterly at variance with Charley's new-fledged notions of High Church and friction shirts.

Charley then took another step in advance by joining the "Union." In his freshman days he had laughed at it very heartily, but now he began to see the error of his ways, and considered that a course of the Union debates was indispensable to prepare him for the exalted rank he was hereafter to assume in society. Ye gods, what nonsense he did talk! though, perhaps, not worse than the majority of unfledged legislators who paraded their reading in that unhappy room, and worked up old schoolboy themes with reminiscences of Demosthenes and Cicero. The great subject of discussion at that period was, "Shall Cromwell have a statue?" and the fury it excited was tremendous. The adjurations addressed to the sainted shade of the martyr king were received with never-failing cheers, while any individual who dared to get up and speak in behalf of the usurper was regarded as a dangerous character, and shunned accordingly. In truth, the Union debates were admirable training for men who had to battle through life, and would be forced to address themselves hereafter to the practical view of history. But this High Church feeling has been gradually dispelled since the period I am writing about, and railways and Mr. Macaulay have done much to overthrow that insane reverence for the past, which can now only seek an outlet in credence tables and Tractarian squabbles with a latitudinarian congregation.

But I think I may pass over this phase of Charles Dashwood's moral development. He was unconsciously laying up a dangerous battery of sophistical arguments through his reverence of the created instead of the Creator; and the hold which religion had once upon him, though in a very general sense, I must confess, was being further weakened by the idea that it could only be supported in the

nearts of its followers by external symbolism. The development resulting from stone altars and chasubles may lead eventually to rationalism ; at least, I should not like to affirm that Charley was the better Christian because he paid such reverence to externals. On the contrary, I am inclined to believe that his faith was weakened, and he feebly tried to prop it up by ostensible reverence, while the sanctuary was invaded by restless thoughts as to the stability of the statue.

But these considerations do not refer to the present. Charles had taken to Tractarianism because it was the fashion at this time, but hardly ever devoted a thought to the reality of the religion he professed. It was not till after years, when he began to find the necessity of a firm holdfast on belief to render him a better Christian and a better man, that he thought with profound gratitude of the escapes he had had from the awful pitfalls of infidelity in which the pride of intellect had threatened to overwhelm him.

These slight hints will be sufficient to prove that my young friend was going through the whole routine of college life in the same way as hundreds who have preceded him, and thousands who will yet follow him, unless some vital change be effected. As for any eventual advantage to be derived from such an education it was simply negative, and, if the present system must be kept up, I would humbly suggest that Oxford be allowed to fulfil its mission as a training mother for clergymen—not the best mother I grant, for she is too apt to pamper her *alumni* with made dishes, instead of restricting herself to solid, healthy food—and let separate colleges be established for those young men who feel no call to the pulpit, and wish to apply themselves to the sister branches. But this digression is growing to an unpardonable length.

Helen still kept up her correspondence with Charles, in spite of the rarity of his replies. She believed, fond girl, that he was working hard, and paving the way to fame, and it was better for her peace of mind that she should think so. Her letters formed a simple diary of all her thoughts, words, and actions. Her pure heart revealed itself in every line, and, though Charles felt inclined to be jealous now and then at the allusions to the Marquis of Lancing, the strong love every letter breathed for his own unworthy self proved that her heart was unaffected. In later letters she complained very often of the annoyances to which she was subjected by the Count, and the persecution she endured from him whenever

her mother was out of the way ; that she had thought of complaining to her, and begging the Count to be dismissed the house, but she had nothing tangible to allege beyond admiration, which, as a woman, she ought to pardon ; and, besides, he was so old a friend that her mother would part from him with regret. Altogether she was happy. Many things occurred at home which seemed strange to her, but which she reconciled by supposing them the result of foreign fashions. Finally, she told him that they were going to Baden in July, and trusted he would join them there. Charles, having nothing better to do, magnanimously replied that he would think about it ; and Helen, like a foolish girl, began counting the hours which slipped away and brought her nearer to happiness.

But it must not be supposed that during this period of his history Charles was closely confined within college walls, and in sight of *alma mater*. During the vacations he had added considerably to his knowledge of life by excursions to London, and the number of new friends he had formed during his silk-gown development enabled him to pass the time very pleasantly. He visited several country houses, and was thrown into the society of well-born, pretty girls, thus rubbing off a great portion of that *mauvaise honte* which affects young Englishmen when in the presence of any female society save their sisters or their *traviati*, and, though his heart was devoted to Helen, he thought it no harm to indulge in a little innocent flirtation, just to keep his hand in. He was gradually becoming a perfect gentleman, and the progress he made was visible.

It is one of the great miseries of college life that young men are kept for so long a time, and at the most critical season, aloof from the society of women whom they could regard with reverence, and who, by their presence, would keep them in due bounds. It is true that the Dean gave evening parties, which were even duller than his dinners, and at which Mrs. Dean did the honours, while Miss Dean played the piano and displayed her somewhat scraggy shoulders to an alarming extent ; but this was far from removing the evil of which I complain. In the first place, Miss Emily Spinks could not condescend below a gentleman commoner ; and, secondly, had she done so, I hardly think her conversation would have had the required effect. She could learnedly chop logic, and in her lighter moments conversed about "Raphael, Correggios, and stuff ;" but then she had a horrid Yorkshire accent, and her knowledge of the

continent was restricted to "Bullon," where she had once passed a "long," and a trip up the Rhine as far as "Kellen," which was her Anglo-German mode of designating that city of unsavoury smells. All that she succeeded in effecting by her display of her person was to become a standing toast at college wines, under the figurative and somewhat unrefined form of the "shoulder of mutton."

Charley had a fortunate escape, however, as regarded Miss St. Clair. She eloped with a strolling player, and carried off a portmanteau full of his clothes with her. She forgot to pay her bills before starting, and, as they amounted to a very considerable sum, he was obliged to pay a visit to a lawyer in Oxford, who kindly discounted him a bill at forty-five per cent. His next letter to Helen was full of bitter sarcasms on the fickleness of woman, which troubled the poor girl extremely, and made her behave very unkindly to the Marquis when he called that evening.

But Charley Dashwood's memory will live for ever in the university, owing to a gallant feat which he performed just before the long vacation, and which resulted in the total defeat of the senior proctor. Acting on the principle that it is not well for man to be alone, Charley transferred his somewhat volatile affections to an amiable young gloveress at Woodstock, who was capable of appreciating his good qualities and the length of his purse. But to this grave sin Charles added another, which was far worse in the proctor's eyes, Woodstock being beyond his police diocese: he would always drive over in a tandem, the leader being put on and taken off just a mile from the town.

Now, the senior proctor was a choleric man, and did not at all like the jokes which the dons cut upon him about his vain attempts to catch Charley in the act. My hero had publicly boasted that no proctor should stop him, and our clerical friend determined that he would be more than a match for him. For this purpose he hired a fly one fine evening, in which he ensconced himself and his myrmidons, and drove quietly out within sight of the Woodstock gate, prepared to stop my hero when he came up. But there were sharp eyes about, and the hostler, who was waiting at Summer Town to unyoke the leader of the team, smelling mischief, jumped on the back of the fly, rode comfortably behind it till it stopped, then bolted over a hedge, and arrived in time to stop Charley, who was driving quietly onwards, unsuspicuous of mischief.

While Charley was engaged in discussing the matter with the hostler, and speculating how he could escape without un-

yoking the leader, and thus confessing his defeat, which he was very disinclined to do, the Birmingham coach came up, and the "Black Prince" inquired what was up. On hearing the dilemma he soon suggested an outlet. It merely consisted in Charley and himself changing coats and places. This was soon effected, and Charley, professionally squaring his shoulders, drove in the dusk past the lurking proctor, and did not stop till he reached the Mitre. The Black Prince followed in his rear, and had hardly reached the spot of danger ere two dusky forms seized the leader, and the proctor uttered his war-cry of "*Siste per fidem.*"

The Black Prince, however, was quite equal to the occasion. He regarded the assailants in the light of footpads, and with various uncomplimentary allusions to their eyes and their blood, double-thonged them to his heart's content. A parley took place, in which the Prince urged his right to drive along the Queen's highway without let or hindrance, like any other gem'man, and hinted that he should pull them all up for a breach of the peace; so the unfortunate proctor was obliged to purchase his silence at a rather heavy rate, and drove back to college sorely discomfited, where he found that the story had preceded him.

Such, and of such nature, was the mode in which Charley prepared himself for becoming an honour to his country; and though much may be pardoned him for his youth and inexperience, still I do not think that he was justified in wasting his time and energies in such unworthy pursuits. I only hope, therefore, that such changes will be introduced into our universities as to render such descriptions as mine simply impossible in future years.

It is quite unnecessary that I should devote any further time to his follies, and if I mention an act of almost criminality to which he was tempted, it is not because he was really guilty even in thought. Bad as he was, he was not so bad as to take advantage of fraud to secure an honourable position in the schools. The incident I allude to was as follows. One morning he received by post a dirty and very illegible note, telling him that the writer had something of importance to communicate, and requesting to meet him in the middle of Port Meadow in the afternoon. Having nothing better to do, Charley mounted his horse, and found himself at the appointed time joined by a respectable-looking man, who thus addressed him:—

"Mr. Charles Dashwood, I presume?"

"Yes, my name is Dashwood; and you, I suppose, are the writer of this valuable document?"

"You may sneer, Mr. Dashwood, but I can tell you I have had to deal with better men than you before now, who have received me with great respect."

"That may be, but it is not to the purpose. What do you want of me? Quick, I am in a hurry."

"It must first be understood that we are dealing as gentlemen, and that you will not repeat the subject of our conversation."

With a queer glance at his interlocutor Charles gave the required promise. The other then proceeded.

"I believe, Mr. Dashwood, it is important to your prospects that you should take a high class. Now, what would you give to the person who put you in the way of getting a first with certainty?"

"Give! Why five hundred pounds."

"You are liberal, but I do not ask so much: two hundred will satisfy the party whose agent I am."

"By Jove! you're a mysterious gentleman; but I really don't see my way clearly."

"Don't you, Mr. Dashwood? Then this, perhaps, will throw some light on it," handing him up a dirty piece of crumpled print. "That," he added solemnly, "is a spoiled proof of the Greek composition paper on to-day. Now do you understand?"

Charles was petrified at this artful scheme, but he merely added, "Go on."

"If you like to agree to my terms, Mr. Dashwood, I will see that you are supplied, when you go up for honours, with each paper as it leaves the press. The examiners are clever enough, and count the number of copies, but we have ways to defeat them. Oh! you need not look surprised; many very worthy gentlemen have availed themselves of my services before now. I could run over a list which would astonish you. But, in a word, what message am I to deliver to my employer?"

"That, if I had him here, I would give him as sound a thrashing as he ever had in his life, for daring to think I am as big a scoundrel as himself."

"Well, well, no offence was meant; you need not be so tetchy. I have your promise of secrecy, and so good afternoon."

And the stranger walked rapidly off in the direction of

Wheatley, leaving Charles lost in blank amazement at the audacity of the scheme. The more he thought over the subject the more he applauded his resolution, and, regarding himself as a model of manly virtue and resolution, he cantered off towards Woodstock, nor drew rein till he reached the King's Arms.

CHAPTER VII.

BADEN-BADEN.

THE promenade was crowded. Beneath every orange tree a party of gaily-dressed people were drinking coffee and nipping ices. Along the walk leading from the Hôtel d'Angleterre to the Conversation's House the vacant space before the Swiss-looking shops was occupied with guests. All were looking intently in one direction, for the band in the kiosk was obtained from the Austrian regiment at Rastadt, and was playing the gallop from Gustavus with its most absurd "kikeri-kikerikee" repeated at intervals, which caused the most hearty and unanimous applause.

During the pause between the pieces of music the crowd that paraded with difficulty up and down the promenade—so encumbered was it with chairs, and the dangling sabres of the Austrian officers—gazed fixedly at the front of the gambling house, where two ladies, mother and daughter, evidently, from their resemblance, were seated, and surrounded by a body guard of gentlemen to defend them from any rush. The men were unanimous in their admiration, the women in their envy, of the younger lady, and I think this affords a very fair criterion that she must have been beautiful exceedingly. In fact, it was my dear Helen, though greatly changed from the young girl whose *gaucherie* had caused vague fears in the maternal breast. She had filled out, and all the angularities which might have disfigured her were rounded off; while her face had lost a portion of its ruddiness, but had gained a look of nobility and hauteur, which formed a striking contrast to the merry child who had recently been bounding among the woods of Birchmere as light-hearted as the butterflies which sported around her head.

At present there was an air of languid annoyance per-

vading her face ; nor was it surprising when she was compelled to listen to five or six young fops, who were buzzing round her and talking inanities, which prevented her from enjoying the music. Nor was she particularly pleased at her mother having thus rendered her the cynosure of admiring eyes by occupying so conspicuous a place ; but she had learned by this time how hopeless it was to try and divert her mother from her purpose, and she strove to guard her face from the vulgar gaze with her deeply-laced parasol.

But Madame Leblanc had a very good motive for selecting this spot. The Marquis of Lancing had arrived the previous evening, and it was an object with her to let him see how much Helen was admired. She knew that nothing so stimulates a man to make a fool of himself as the fear of losing any object on which he has set his affections, and which he has already regarded in the light of his own property. But the lady was puzzled about the Marquis. She could not understand him at all sometimes, and was even inclined to think he was not such a fool as he looked ; but then a glance at that face re-assured her. Stupidity was photographed on his countenance by the hand of that most exact worker, Nature ; and she felt relieved by the inspection, and mentally vowed that Helen should win him yet. But he was certainly distressingly shy, and, though the mother had given him numerous opportunities at Paris to declare his passion, he had held aloof, and matters were as far from fruition on the last day as on the first. He had quitted Paris to return to his senatorial duties with a promise to meet them at Baden ; and here he was, certainly as much in love as ever, and yet not a trace of a foregone resolution could be read on his inane face. Madame Leblanc determined to precipitate matters, for her daughter had already been hanging on her hands too long.

But, to tell the truth, the Marquis had not the slightest intention of marrying Helen, and although he was excessively fond of her, almost next to himself I may say, such an absurd idea as that the Most Noble the Marquis of Lancing was going to marry the daughter of a gambling-house keeper had never crossed his mind. He was certainly in great perturbation of spirit ; he could not bear to be away from her side, and felt miserable if she smiled on anybody else ; and yet there was something about Helen which warned him not to make any dishonouring proposal to her. What the end of it was to be he did not know, and

although at times the idea crossed his mind that Madame Leblanc was anxious to make money of her daughter, still the style in which she lived precluded the notion. In this dilemma the Marquis bethought him of an invaluable friend, the Honourable Captain Fitzspavin, whom he summoned to his councils, and under his guidance prepared to open the summer campaign. The Captain was to remain passive, and watch for a loophole at which the Marquis would jump at once. This being satisfactorily arranged, the Marquis resumed his old place by Helen's side, and his old habits of maundering.

Madame Leblanc was obliged to leave the young couple more frequently together than had hitherto been the case, as her itching for play rendered her a very constant visitant to Monsieur Benazet's board of green cloth, where, Penelope-like,—

“The toil of the day
She strove to undo every night;”

in other words, she lost by clever martingales and infallible *coups* all the money she had amassed during the winter. This was a settled rule with her, and Fitzspavin saw it with delight. “It's all right, my boy,” he remarked confidentially to the Marquis; “give the old woman rope enough and she'll hang herself—she'll have to come to our terms yet.” But Madame had other resources at her command, of which the couple were unaware; and hence I do not think their neat little scheme on Helen's virtue will prove successful. However, time will show that, as well as many other secrets.

The day after the visit to the promenade was devoted to a drive to Eberstein Schloss; and Helen, who was as yet unacquainted with continental scenery, was lost in admiration at the glorious panorama which lay expanded at her feet when she stood on the roof of the tower. Perhaps, the whole length and breadth of Germany does not contain a more lovely spot than the valley of the Mourg, extending for miles between towering hills, the stream noisily rustling through the centre; while the quaint little town of Gernsbach, with its Swiss houses and rude bridge, gives that vitality to the landscape without which the most magnificent scenery is unsatisfactory. When she had gazed her fill the party proceeded to the carriage, where a hamper of good things had been unpacked the while; and the generous Eberstein *blut*, which the Grand Duke, in a liberal spirit,

sells to the visitor, was heartily approved of by all the company.

Succeeding days were devoted to the surrounding scenery not the least interesting spot being Allerheiligen, with its mad stream bounding frantically down between frowning walls of rocks to hurry and embrace the Rhine. Nor was the Mummelsee left unvisited; and that mystic spot seemed a well-fitted abode for the fairies who are supposed to hold their revels in its subaqueous grottos. But Helen was the only one of the company who really took any pleasure in the scenery; her companions were *blasés*, the majority of them from over-excitement, the Marquis because it was fashionable; and her hearty bursts of admiration only drew from him a pitying glance and a profound remark to Fitz-spavin of, "A wevy queer girl that, I must say."

But Helen cared little what they thought. She was imbued with a strong artistic feeling, which the scenery aided to develope, and her sketch-book was continually in requisition, much to the annoyance of the gentlemen, for they had to wait her leisure, and would have much preferred returning to Baden. It was, however, Madame Leblanc's policy to humour her daughter as far as was practicable, and she let her have her way in such trifling matters as these, for they afforded her opportunities to remark that her daughter was a true child of nature, and that she had been just the same at her age; to which Captain Fitz-spavin would reply with a low bow and a most intense wink to the Marquis, whose face was suddenly hidden in his scented handkerchief.

And when Helen was wearied of driving about, what intense amusement was afforded her by the promenade, with its motley groups and ever-changing types! That narrow belt of gravel extending from the *restaurant* to the library was a stage trodden with equal privileges by every class of society—an epitome of human life, with its chances and changes. King and cobbler, prince and packman, lords and lackeys, all thronged to lay their tribute before the high priest of Mercury, and from none was the offering rejected: the bank-notes of the millionaire and the florin of the peasant out for a holiday were impartially swallowed by that all-craving man. The only thing asked from you in return was that you should make no disturbance; and you could not annoy the usually impassible Monsieur Benazet more than by committing suicide. His heart and purse were open to all who had lost their *vaticum* at his table;

and I have known several talented Irish gentlemen pay their hotel bill, and have something left, by a judicious appeal to the Lord of Control, and by displaying a propensity to make a disturbance. But this must be within certain limits: go one step too far, and you fell into the clutches of a ruthless gendarmerie, who never quitted you till you had crossed the frontier. When an irate baronet—a bosom friend of the Grand Duke Constantine—allowed his feelings to carry him so far as to break a rake over a croupier's head, that stoic never stirred a feature, but calmly signed to the police to remove the gentleman and the pieces, and continued his monotonous *et couleur perd*, as if being thrashed by a secretary of an embassy was a portion of the duties of his office.

Ah me ! Baden is a pleasant place—there cannot be two opinions about that; and they know how to ice champagne there to perfection. Then that Lichtenthaler Allée, with its side walks leading nowhere in particular, is apt to play the deuce with a man's heart if he lounge along it with a fair creature in white muslin. Indeed, I would earnestly recommend all inflammable bachelors to stick to the roulette table ; they will find that the cheaper in the end.

The summer of 1846 will be long remembered, were it only for the wine which that beneficent year produced ; and the glorious weather had attracted to Baden countless swarms of visitors. The Russians assumed the first rank, as they always do, by virtue of their roubles and their extravagance ; then came the Americans, trying to outvie their Anglo-Saxon brethren in splendour and grammar—in both I need not say sustaining tremendous defeats, which afforded some consolation for Lexington. Poles, too, flitted about mysteriously, coming no one knew where from, and disappearing again with equal caution, deeply regretted by their laundress or a too confiding tailor. The French, also, had made a new invasion of Germany ; their red ribbons glistened in every corner. It is a curious fact that the French are only divided into two great classes ; they are all chevaliers, some of the legion of honour ; others of the equally meritorious order of industry—some even are enabled to combine both, and the fusion produces an admirable result.

Of course, when such a mob of gaily-dressed individuals was collected, the English could not be absent. They scented notoriety afar off, and pounced upon it like ravening vultures ; and that interesting spectacle of *Les Anglaises pour rire* was repeated for the thirtieth time since the occu-

pation of Paris by the Allies, with fresh scenery and decorations. Sturdy Britons, cased in leather gaiters and irresponsible coats, scaled the surrounding mountains; they took the Alt-Schloss by storm, and appeared to perform acrobatic feats on the turrets and every dangerous point. John Smith proudly scrawled his name on tottering fragments of stonework, at which a monkey would have looked twice before he ventured to climb, and paraded the promenade in the evening with conscious pride, as if he too had done something to ennable his patronymic.

Helen never wearied of gazing on her countrymen and women. To her this was quite a novel sight; and it afforded her intense amusement to watch Mrs. Britannia, as she appeared in the most outrageous of costumes, and fancied that she could set up her home wherever she stopped for the night. But when we remember that the greatest lady of the land entered into a violent personal dispute at Ostende with the chambermaids touching the airing of some sheets, surely Mrs. Smith has a prescriptive right to do the same, though, perhaps, in less choice language.

Possibly, however, Helen felt the greatest interest in Captain Bobadil. I have no need to introduce him to you, reader, for if you have ever crossed the channel, you have made hi acquaintance. No Englishman ever yet got into any difficulty with the police but Captain Bobadil turned up to be his guide, philosopher, and friend. He is ubiquitous. Last year I met him on the Yeni Kyprü at Constantinople, engaged in the transport service, but by some extraordinary process he reached Baden before me. He is a standing instance of the tyranny of the English government. He was once a lieutenant in the coast guard, and got into trouble by rumpling the dresses of an ambassador's lady which passed under his supervision. I believe he was superseded for awhile, and ever since he rails at government; but he affects a mystery as to the cause of his being shelved. When in a jovial humour he will make dark allusions to the First Lord having been jealous of his humble abilities; but, as a general rule, he observes strict silence. *Au reste*, he is a walking encyclopædia of scandal, and about the best *cicerone* a new traveller can pick up. He soon scraped an acquaintance with Helen, when he found that the gentlemen of her party tried to keep aloof from him, and, whenever she walked down to the promenade alone to study human nature in one of its quaintest aspects, he was sure to be by her side, and felt uncommonly proud

of being noticed by the acknowledged beauty of the season.

"Nonsense, my dear young lady," he remarked one afternoon, as she expressed her opinion that some distinguished Englishmen had passed; "nonsense, I know them all. That tall man with the moustache is a barber from town: he calls himself a count here. A pretty fellow! Why, he's trimmed my hyacinthine locks many a time; but he mustn't hear me, though, or he'll be dunning me for that little bill I owe him. That's the worst of railways—they bring you into the most unpleasant collisions. That gentleman walking with him is Captain Vavasour, as he calls himself. If ever he was a captain, it must have been in the Guards Black. You understand, eh? Don't ever buy a horse of him. Now that other gentleman coming along is really a respectable man. A parson? Nonsense! that's Inspector Trail, of the London detectives. M. Benazet hires him for the season to look after London swell mobsmen. It's a pity he can't make a clear sweep of some of our honourable scamps. There's one," pointing to our friend Fitzspavin. "He's been in every gaol on the continent, and has run up a bill at every hotel. Don't trust him with any money or any secrets—he'll dispose of both of them."

I do not think I need quote any more of my amusing old friend's revelations: the specimen I have given will enable my readers to recognise him at once. Nor were his remarks about the ladies a whit more charitable, and if Helen had put implicit faith in all his statements she would have been obliged to believe that all the scamps and demis-reps of Europe were here congregated. I am afraid, however, that there was considerable truth in his remarks, and, had Helen not been particularly cautious, she might have compromised her reputation very seriously before she was aware she had incurred the slightest danger.

But there was another reason which led her to court Bobadil's company. The Count had begun to become terribly assiduous, and waylaid her whenever she was left alone. He had tried to terrify her by dark hints about her mother's projects with regard to her, and implored her to consider him in the light of a true friend, who would run any risk to save her. He knew that her heart was not her own, but still he was willing to wait and hope, and be the most devoted of her servants. He would watch her as her guardian angel, and frustrate her mother's iniquitous schemes. She should not be the victim of sinister in-

trigues so long as he had a hand to wield a sword in her defence. It was in vain that Helen tried to gain any definite information from him. He would not tell her what danger she ran, but said that he would warn her at the decisive moment; and if—and here he assumed an ineffable smile, which was more disgusting than a menace—she found herself compelled to quit her mother's roof, might he be allowed to bear her company, and take her to her friends?

All this set Helen thinking. She saw nothing against which she ought to guard: everything seemed to be going on in the usual satisfactory manner, so she soon began to regard the Count as a dreamer, who conjured up danger which had no existence save in his own diseased brain. Still she could not overcome the repugnance she had felt for the Count from the first moment she had seen him. She felt that he was scheming against her peace of mind, and though she scorned the idea that he was daring to aspire to her hand there was an uncomfortable feeling in his presence which she could not control. Julie, too, was becoming more mysterious than ever. She would give way to violent fits of sulking which lasted for days, and which she would strive to make up for by renewed attentions. Helen was almost certain that she had seen her talking earnestly with the Count in the garden more than once, when the rest of the household had retired to bed; but she was unwilling to mention the circumstance to her mother, who seemed to be so fond of the Count, and made him her confidant in every emergency.

Before long, however, Helen was relieved from the Count's presence. He went off on pressing business to Paris, and Helen was rendered doubly secure by a most welcome letter from Charley, announcing his immediate arrival at Baden. The reason of the Count's sudden departure will be discovered from the following conference between the Marquis and his bosom friend.

"The time is drawing near," Fitzspavin remarked one evening as the two sate smoking and playing a quiet game of *piquet* at their hotel; "the old lady is getting hard up. That precious Count is off to Paris to spout the diamonds. I have been expecting it some time, and I got it out of Crofton to-night over an extra bottle of champagne; so now make your game, my boy, while the ball's a-rolling."

"Well, but how? I don't see my way exactly," said the

Marquis listlessly. "Let's have another bottle and talk it over."

"Why, you've got it all your own way now. The money Madame raises on the diamonds will soon follow the rest, and she must have tin to get back to Paris and open the shop. She'll be obliged to apply to you, and you'll be willing to advance it—for a consideration of course."

"That being the fair Helen, I suppose you mean."

"Of course. I don't see what there's to prevent you from going in and winning. The old lady has no very high feelings on the score of honour, and, after all, if Helen follows in her footsteps the mother has given you opportunities enough, the Lord knows. I shouldn't feel at all scrupulous; money will salve the matter over, and you've plenty of that to spare."

"But," remarked the Marquis, "I don't think the girl is so very fond of me as all that. Besides, there's something about her rather queer. She's not like the usual run of girls, and I shouldn't have taken her for her mother's daughter if I hadn't the old lady's word for it."

"Oh, nonsense! you're not so green as to expect her to throw herself at your head. All these things are a matter of speculation: the longer the resistance the higher the price; so, if you'll take my advice, you'll buckle to at once while Madame wants money."

"I will," said the Marquis with unwonted energy, and so the worthy couple parted.

Meanwhile Helen, utterly unconscious of the plot of which she was to be the victim, brightened up wonderfully at the prospect of her Charley's speedy arrival, and received the Marquis with such sunny smiles that she only confirmed that infatuated young man in his iniquitous resolve. He laid the flattering unction to his soul that he had at length produced the desired impression; the fruit was ripe for plucking, and he had only to stretch out his hand and cull the delicious morsel. However, he deferred the matter for a day or two, until a projected party on the rocks took place, and would not listen to Fitzspavin's advice that he should open negotiations with Madame Leblanc. The Marquis believed that Helen could no longer resist his manifold accomplishments, and wisely determined to enjoy his victory at the cheapest possible rate. By this method he would save an outlay of ready money, which was always a peculiarly unpleasant process for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARQUIS OF LANCING.

ON leaving town, Charley travelled *en grand seigneur*. He went from Ostende to Cologne by the railway, and thence by steamer up the glorious Rhine. I fancy he felt some disappointment at the sight of that river: we all do more or less on first seeing it, for the ideal we have formed from album engravings of a pellucid stream is dissipated by that pea-soup mixture which passes current for water. Besides, the principal beauties of the Rhine cannot be detected from the deck of a steamer. They are only to be found by stopping for a season at the chief stations, and extending your researches on either side of the river. Quickness of locomotion has greatly lessened the effect of the Rhine scenery, and the constant succession of ruined fortalices crowning every height and crag between Coblenz and Bingen eventually palls the eye, while you give way to a feverish longing for nature under a more tranquil aspect.

Our forefathers managed these things better. They travelled in a roomy *caleche*, and did not predetermine some given point which must be reached within a certain time. They rested on the road, and thoroughly exhausted the scenery before they went onwards; and this quiet mode of locomotion had a beneficial effect on their digestion, and consequently on their temper. Now-a-days we have changed all this. Travelling Englishmen are so many Isaak Laquedems, who are impelled by a fierce desire to move onwards, which would gratify Policeman X; and they fancy that the only object of travelling is to cover the greatest quantity of ground in the shortest space of time. If, however, travelling is to be regarded as a means to develop that artistic feeling which every educated man acquires in a greater or less degree from association and the amenities of polite society, that end cannot be attained by rushing helter-skelter from Paris to Stamboul, and "doing" the scenery from the window of a railway carriage, or beneath the awning of a steamer, which is always in the way when you reach the most interesting spot.

However, Charley in this merely followed the manners

and customs of his countrymen, and regarded the scenery as his own property, duly placed there by nature for the gratification of those persons with money in their pocket. I fancy, too, that he had a much greater feeling of internal satisfaction at visiting those huge caravansarais, which have been built for the refuge of travellers in all the towns where Englishmen make it a point to reside for awhile. Nor did he, I am happy to say, consider it his duty to support his character as a Briton by blustering and calling all the landlords a parcel of rogues, and worthy descendants of those Faust-Ritter who formerly plundered all that came within their reach. He carefully calculated the expenses incidental on a stay in an hotel as large as the Clarendon ; and a comparison between the two left a large balance in favour of the Germans, without speaking of the extreme civility which was thrown in gratis.

I know perfectly well that Mr. Smith or friend Jones, on reading this apology for German landlords, will wax irate, and doubtlessly write on the margin, "The writer's an ass," or some other complimentary effusion of his spleen. He perfectly well remembers that when he went up the Rhine last he had a bitter battle at every hotel with the landlord about that iniquitous charge of twenty-four kreuzer for *bougies*, and he ought to know the price of wax candles if any one did—he hadn't been keeping an Italian warehouse thirty years for nothing. True, O Smith ! I will allow your objection. I will agree with you that eightpence is too much to pay each night for light to go to bed with—but I fancy this imposition has been established by Britons themselves; at least, I know that in those parts of Germany where Englishmen are not yet expected to return with the swallows, this imposition is unknown. But, after all, it is not a very exorbitant sum ; and oh, Smith ! when you grow angry at being cheated, and assert your dignity in that loud voice, which is the terror of Kellners and the amusement of the cosmopolitan, you have assuredly forgotten that admirable passage in the "Sentimental Journey" about the inn at Radicofani and the two hard eggs. Read it, O Smith, with a reverent spirit before you start on your next tour, and I feel sure you will not begrudge even eightpence for candles.

Mr. Dashwood being, as I have already hinted, a youth of noble temperament and careless habits, fell into the opposite extreme ; he was somewhat puzzled by the half French, half German characters of his bill, and ended by paying it without appeal. In this he was wrong ; mistakes will

happen, and they ought to be rectified at once, which any German landlord will be only too happy to do for his own character. It is true that these mistakes are rarely on the wrong side; but, for all that, I could not be inclined to accuse the landlords without appeal of a desire to cheat; and when I remember what a German *table d'hôte* is, with long-haired Kellner trying to satisfy everybody at once, and appearing at every moment with a battery of bottles under each arm, I am only too grateful that so few mistakes occur, and that my humble bottle of Niersteiner is not converted into champagne by the time I have to pay for it.

Charley Dashwood could not have arrived at Baden at a more unpropitious moment for Madame Leblanc, for her schemes with reference to the Marquis seemed to her ripe, and she was sadly afraid the hot-headed young man would spoil all by his precipitation. She was determined, *coute qui coute*, that Charles should not be Helen's husband, and was quite careless as to what schemes she employed to prevent that consummation. Her daughter's happiness, her own character, were to her trifles light as air when she wished to serve her ambition; and she had determined on a final measure of the most decisive character if, as she had reason to fear, Charley was not prepared to coalesce with her in furthering the interests of her daughter.

But Madame was far too good a schemer to terrify Charles by any overt act of opposition; and the affectionate manner in which she greeted him led him to wrap himself in fancied dreams of bliss. His Helen, of course, was delighted to see him. Poor girl! she had longed for the moment since the hour they had parted at Birchmere. And then he was so improved, he had grown so manly, and his moustache became him so well—only the eyes of love could detect the incipient down which cast so slight a shade over Charley's upper lip. An interminable talk took place between them; she hoped and feared she knew not what; but the present was all in all with her, and she felt certain that her mother would oppose no barrier to her felicity. But she was not yet acquainted with all the resources of that lady's fertile brain.

The hours flew by with lightning speed. Charles had been introduced in due form to the Marquis, and a mutual antipathy had sprung up between them at the first glance. The Marquis saw in him an obstacle to his schemes, while Charles chafed at his constant dangling by Helen's side. They were, however, excessively polite to each other—too

much so to insure any lengthened peace ; and when they separated for the night the Marquis sought a conference with his confederate.

" Fitz, I don't like that boy being here," he said moodily, after gulping down a very strong glass of brandy and water ; " he seems to talk to Helen with a familiarity which is highly unbecoming, and, confuse it, she had hardly a word for me during the whole night."

" Oh ! I can see through it all," was the reply. " Madame finds the time growing too long ; she can't wait any longer for money : they refused to lend her any more at the bank to-night, I know, and she must play. That young cub has been brought here to force you into opening your mind. I can read milady's moves long before they are played. I have been expecting this for some time."

" Well, but, Fitz, I don't see my way clearly. This young fellow's her cousin, and suppose she cuts up rough at my proposals, she'll go and tell him all about it, and, hang it, I can't fight a cad—a fellow that's related to a woman like old mother Leblanc !"

" Oh, that's all stuff ! I know the Dashwoods. That young fellow comes of a good family ; he's no more related to her than you are. Julie told me that there was some love affair between them when they were children. She was brought up with him ; but I don't believe they're in any way related. Besides, you need not fear anything from him. Leave him to me ; I'll manage him for you."

" Now, will you ? Well, you are a good fellow, Fitz ; and, now I come to think of it, I can spare you that hundred you wanted. I find, on looking over my tin, that I have more than I shall require while I am here. To-morrow, then, I'll set to work and see how Miss Helen's pulse beats."

And with this valorous resolve, and with a heart much lightened by his friend's generous offer to take any contingent quarrel on his hands, the Marquis went off to bed, and slept as soundly as if he had performed some highly meritorious action. In the meanwhile a very different scene had been taking place at the Villa Braunfels, where the Leblanc family was residing.

" Helen, dear," said her mother, as they were retiring for the night, " will you come into my bedroom in half an hour's time ? I have important matters to talk over with you."

Helen obeyed of course, wondering much what this secret interview betokened, and on entering the room found her

mother nestled into an arm-chair, and smoking a most fragrant cigarette.

"Helen," the fond mother began, "I have asked you to come here to-night because matters are approaching a climax. You must be aware that you have been deprived of nothing which could insure your comfort and happiness. You must allow that I have been an indulgent mother to you, and have never interfered with you in any way. I felt such confidence in your good heart, my child, that I was certain, when the time arrived, I might count on your devotion and passive obedience. I trust I have not been mistaken."

Helen bowed a silent acquiescence, though much alarmed at the turn matters were taking; and her mother, after two or three deliberate puffs, went on:—

"So long as you and Charles Dashwood were separated, I allowed you to carry on a correspondence with him. I was wrong, I am afraid; but I had good reasons for my conduct, which I need not here enter into. I looked upon it as a childish engagement between you, and, knowing that it could never be carried into effect, I trusted to time to change your feelings. I am happy to believe that I was right. The devoted attention the Marquis of Lancing has paid you has, I am glad to see, had its due effect on your heart, and I have no doubt that you are awaiting anxiously and blushingly the happy moment when he shall avow his passion. Hence, my dear girl, I am obliged to put you on your guard against any mistaken intimacy with Charley. You must not do anything to frighten the Marquis, and, though I must speak in the highest praise of the clever manner in which you have caught so splendid a husband, still my own experience tells me that, in the present circumstances, I can be of great assistance to you."

Helen sank into a chair utterly speechless. She was overwhelmed with terror and grief, and the idea that people had thought she was trying to catch the Marquis stung her to the heart. Her mother, however, proceeded:—

"Under the circumstances, then, my child, I have made up my mind to leave Baden at once. Charles must be got rid of, and so soon as the Marquis has declared himself, which I trust to your skill to make him do to-morrow at our picnic on the rocks, we will return to Paris, and make the requisite preparations for your marriage. I am much pleased with you, my darling, so kiss me, and we will regard the matter as settled."

But by this time Helen had regained courage, and faced

her mother like a tigress robbed of her young. The thought that she must give up her Charley, her dear boy, for such a man as the Marquis, whom she now detested thoroughly when she found that her way of meeting him had been so shamefully misinterpreted, roused her to the utmost, and she burst forth in a wild torrent of protestations and appeals for mercy. She was betrothed to Charley in the sight of heaven ; she had promised to be his wife, or never marry another ; and keep her word she would, no matter what sacrifices it might entail.

" Oh, mother ! " she at length fell on her knees before her, and moaned, " why did you take me from my happy home ? Why was I not permitted to seek my own livelihood, strong in the love of my Charley, and trustful in the future ? It is true that you have surrounded me with luxuries to which I was a stranger a year ago ; but why ask me to pay such a fearful price for them by sacrificing my peace of mind — my love ? Oh, mother, mother, pity me ! Recall your decision. Say you were trying me and my love. Let me hope, or would you see me die here at your feet ? "

Strange as it may appear, Madame Leblanc never felt such strong love for her daughter as she did at this moment, when a word from her was to blast her life happiness ; but not a trace of this could be seen on her impassible features. She merely raised her from the ground and said,—

" It cannot be ; even if I did not entertain such strong objections, nature has raised an insurmountable barrier between you and Charley. Ask me no more. Believe me when I say that it is impossible."

" Then hear me, mother. Before heaven I have vowed to be the wife of no man but Charley, and I will keep my word. You will try to make me a victim to your selfish schemes, and I will obey you so far as to give up my hopes of happiness, but I cannot yield further."

" Wretched girl ! then you will force your mother to avow her shame. Do you wish me to sink into the earth before you ? Charles can never be more to you than a brother, for he is so in the sight of heaven."

This cleverly-acted plot was more effective than Madame Leblanc had anticipated, for the fatal words had scarcely escaped her lips when Helen fell down motionless at her feet, as if shot through the heart. For a long time Madame's efforts, united with Julie's, were employed in vain to restore her to consciousness ; but at last they succeeded. Helen gazed wildly round her, as if striving to realise the

awful truth. Suddenly the horror of her position flashed across her mind; her head drooped like a lily nipped in the stem. She faintly muttered, "Mother, I will obey you," and again fell back in a lengthened fit of unconsciousness.

Madame Leblanc was triumphant, and though a pang now and then crossed her mind at having thus ulcerated her daughter's heart, still she thought that, as with herself, position and wealth would soon cauterise the wound. But, though so clever in other respects, the thought never occurred to her that the Marquis might be playing a double game as well. She trusted too implicitly in the power of woman's beauty, forgetting that there are some persons in the world whose hearts have been converted by selfishness into that petrifaction which forms the motive of Hauff's weird, ghastly story, *Das Steinerne Herz*.

When the guests assembled for the projected picnic my darling Helen was the ghost of her former self; and, though she tried to assume a forced gaiety, a lover's observant eyes soon noticed a great change. When she looked at Charley, which was very rarely, she seemed to suffer from an inward shudder. She was more fitted for her bed than for pleasure, but the strong feeling which impelled her to drive Charley from her side gave her unnatural strength. With this view she coqueted with the Marquis, and paid the most flattering attention to his remarks, which the more confirmed the misguided young man in his designs, and he determined that this day should witness the confirmation of his scheme on Helen's heart.

After a dinner on the grass, which passed off dully enough, although the Marquis vigorously attacked the bottle, and his weak brain soon began to show the effect, the party dispersed in different directions to ramble about the rocks. Helen and the Marquis were together, and Charley, when he attempted to follow them, was cleverly stopped by Madame Leblanc, who forced him into a long conversation about Birchmere and the late Captain. The lady was the essence of amiability, and talked much at intervals about the brilliant prospects which were opening for her Helen, which only rendered the young man more impatient and anxious to follow her and the Marquis.

At length an opportunity for escape presented itself: Madame Leblanc was called away by some of the guests, and Charley rushed off, full of anxious fears and doubts, in search of Helen. Her conduct to him during the whole day had been very strange, and could only be explained by

the notion that she had decided on forgetting him, and accepting the Marquis's hand; but this should not happen, he swore bitterly, until he had had an explanation with her, which he was determined to force at all hazards. Unfortunately for him, it is not so easy to find a person wandering through the mazes of the "rocks" which frown so grandly above Baden, and, after a long ramble in every direction, Charles grew tired and disgusted. The infallible remedy in such cases being a reflective smoke, he lay down on a ledge of rock, from which the Vanity Fair at his feet could be surveyed, and the spiral wreaths that ascended to the skies so lazily soon proved that he was offering a sacrifice to Nemesis, which had the desired effect of soothing his temper.

He lay there, half sleepily, half listlessly, and began to form a better opinion of Helen; for his vanity would not allow him to think that she would choose such an ill-looking fellow as the Marquis in his place, forgetting that money and title would turn a *uran-utan* into an *Adouis*—when voices suddenly struck his ear. He listened; it was his Helen speaking. But why such passionate utterance? Who could be the person daring to insult her? He rose from his seat, and heard her say,—

"Unhand me, my lord! Your very presence is an insult to me after the odious proposition you have dared to make. Back, I say, or I will scream for assistance at any hazard."

"My dear girl, don't be so foolish. Surely you did not think I meant to marry you? I should fancy that the proposition I made you would be only too acceptable to the daughter of Madame Leblanc."

With these words he again drew near to Helen, and she was about to carry her threat into execution, when Charley bounded between them. He was magnificent in his wrath, like a young Apollo strangling the Lernæan hydra, as he drew Helen back, and struck the Marquis a violent blow on the chest, which caused him to totter. He would have fallen had he not been supported by the rock behind him.

The spot where this encounter took place is well known to my readers, I have no doubt. It was close to the Devil's Bridge, that narrow strip of wood arching over two beetling rocks, which descend sheer to the ground nearly four hundred feet. The view from the bridge is apt to render the most daring visitor dizzy, so slight seems the breastwork which guards him from destruction. On the flat table rock leading down to the bridge Helen and Charley were now

standing, while the discomfited Marquis was recovering from the effect of the sudden assault. In a second, however, he was on his feet again, and yelling, "Dog, you would dare to strike me?" he rushed on my hero, and dealt him a stinging lash across the face with his riding whip.

The blow was fated to cost him dearly. Charley bounded on him like a madman, and they were soon locked in a close embrace. Over and over they turned in their frenzied efforts to gain the upper hand, till at length they rolled on to the bridge. But the Marquis was no match for Charley who had been brought up at the feet of Sambo Sutton, and whose sanguinary contests with bargees had taught him the full use of his limbs. Charley soon gained the mastery, and, rising to a kneeling position, he pressed his adversary with all his power against the frail balustrade. Suddenly it gave way with a crash, and Charley had only just time to save himself, when the Marquis toppled over with a heavy lurch, and disappeared from the sight of the awe-stricken gazers.

But the Marquis was not destined to die with his sins unrepented; a friendly fir tree stretched out its arms just in the place to bar his passage, and his fall was broken. Fortunately for him his tailor was an honest man, and employed no devil's dust manufacturers, for his coat nobly responded to the violent exertion demanded from it, and sustained his weight. For a moment he hung in mid-air like one of those golden lambs we see suspended in our streets, and whose fleeces are so suggestive of the fat impending over customers. Then he managed to turn round, and, by an effort of almost superhuman strength, clutched at the branch. He pulled himself up, and so soon as Charley saw that his rival was in comparative safety he turned to Helen, who was lying senseless on the plateau.

His efforts to recall her to life being fruitless, he rushed off for assistance, and she was soon carried down to the Ritter Saal, while the Marquis was removed from his exalted position, and recovered by the judicious application of brandy. But he did not seem at all grateful for his escape. He vowed bitter threats of vengeance against Charley, and could not be pacified until his faithful Fitz promised that he would take care that the rascal should meet him.

In the meanwhile Madame Leblane was raving at Charley. She had only heard a vague account of the accident, but that was enough to tell her that all her hopes of catching the Marquis were gone irrevocably. In her fury she struck

at him; she cursed him and his family, vowed that they had been the ruin of her and hers; and finally, finding herself powerless to avenge herself, she went off into a fit of hysterics, from which we will leave her to recover at leisure.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUEL.

IT is wonderful what a remarkable change the last few hours had effected in Charles Dashwood; he had emerged from boyhood by one bound, and had assumed, in the presence of danger, all the feelings and attributes of a man. The bitter animosity he bore to the Marquis made him at times regret his safety; but then this gave way to a feeling of savage joy that he would be enabled to shoot him like a dog. He was determined that his enemy should not escape: if he declined to challenge him Charles made up his mind to insult him publicly in the rooms, and thus force him into a fight. In short, he was in a most bloodthirsty temper, and, though he had felt such bitter remorse at that awful moment when his adversary seemed doomed to a certain death, so strange is human nature that he now felt that his living was an insult, and that it was his bounden duty to wash out the outrage done to Helen in his blood.

But he had no necessity to fear that the Marquis would try and escape his righteous vengeance; the story of the quarrel and the deadly struggle had been bruited about Baden in a hundred different forms, while elderly dames were wagging their heads affably together, and discussing my poor Helen's manifold sins and wickednesses. "It was only what they expected," they were unanimous in remarking; "those creatures who are always surrounded by men never come to any good; and now there was a duel to be fought about her, and that nice young man, the Marquis, was going to risk his life for such a worthless creature;" and so they went on, until they had torn poor Helen into little shreds, while the poor girl, after a long and violent scene with her mother, and at length inducing her to enlist

to the true state of the case, was writing the following tear-stained note to my hero :—

“ Do not be angry, dearest, with your poor Helen, or think her wilful; but I am forced by stern necessity to bid you come near me no more. If I were at liberty to tell you my secret, you would know what reasons move me to this step; but the honour of another person whom I love dearly is at stake, and I must bid you an eternal farewell, even at the risk that you will form an unjust opinion of my conduct.

“ My mother, I am happy to say, now sees your conduct in the right light; she calls you the preserver of our honour, and would like to see you. But for my sake, dearest, keep away from the house: your presence would only render me more wretched, and add to the grief I now feel at parting from you—for we leave for Paris this very night.

“ I trust, dearest Charles, that we shall meet again, but not until you have quite made up your mind that we can never carry out the fond hopes we once formed. The barrier is insurmountable, and believe me when I say that you can never be more than a brother to your broken-hearted Helen. Do not doubt my love. I feel at times that it is criminal, but I cannot prevent it; and I will fervently pray that this love may soon become purified, and that in time I may be able to meet you without a shudder at the past.

“ I earnestly implore you, then, dearest Charles, to wean your thoughts from all sinful love, and that you will learn to look on me as a sister. More I can never prove to you, and do not lacerate my heart by refusing me your support. I feel that great trials are in store for me, and in my hour of necessity it will be a true comfort to know that in you I can insure a protector. When the time arrives I will write to you, and then I feel sure you will hurry to help

“ Your broken-hearted sister,
“ HELEN.”

This epistle was not at all suited to improve Master Charley's temper, for he could make nothing out of it at all. What obstacle could prove such an insurmountable barrier to his hopes? What on earth could Helen mean by bidding him an eternal farewell, and then hoping to meet him again soon? What right had she so wilfully to break an engagement he had formed with her? He could not believe she loved another; but what was the meaning of that secret, and its being shared by some one she dearly loved? Was it Madame Leblanc who had forced this promise from her

daughter? Oh! it was atrocious; but he would prove to her that he was not such a weak fool as to give way to a woman, who had only so recently remembered that she was Helen's mother. He sprang up to take his hat, when a quiet tap was heard at his door. Muttering some angry remark at the unwelcome intrusion, he growled out, "Entrez!"

Who should make her appearance but the ever-mysterious Julie! She glided in with her usual noiseless step, and confronted the young man. Placing a finger on her lips, and then carefully locking the door, she walked up to him and hurriedly whispered, "Be careful; I have not a moment to waste. My absence from the house must not be suspected. There is one there who is no friend of yours."

More and more puzzled, Charles was going to speak, but Julie again interrupted him:—

"Tell me you love that pale-faced English girl—you would marry her—give me your word of honour you would marry her, and I will put proofs of her legitimacy in your hands. Hush! not a word; I will believe you: a Dashwood never yet broke a promise. But not now; you must come to me in Paris. Be at the Hôtel Windsor during the first week in December. I will then tell you more, and perhaps give you the papers to which I allude. Ah! I see you have had a letter from Miss Helen; but do not be downcast. There is some foul intrigue going on, but Julie Monthemar will find it out. Remember the time of appointment, and not a word of this interview to any one, if you hope to succeed in your project."

In a second she had glided from the room, and left Charley in a perfect state of amazement as to his future proceedings. True to his old motto of "wait and hope," he, however, determined on not going near Madame Leblanc's, but place implicit confidence in Julie's promises. He felt certain that the mysterious waiting-maid could carry out anything she determined on doing, and he felt indisposed to hamper her movements by any undue precipitation; and in this, I think, he showed more sense than he has hitherto displayed.

Another tap at the door, but this time of a far more energetic nature, interrupted his meditations, and in walked Captain Fitzspavin with a very martial air. The Marquis, after due reflection, and when the heat of passion had passed off, began to think that he had run risk enough about a woman whom he felt he could never win, and wished to get out of a ~~duse~~ if he could. But to this Fitz

would not assent; the matter was so public already that an apology would not satisfy public demand, and so with a very ill grace the Marquis deputed his gallant friend to bear a cartel of mortal defiance to his adversary.

The matter was soon arranged, for Charles would be only too glad to drill a hole through the Marquis, and was not at all in a mood to offer any apology. It was settled that they should meet the next morning at eight o'clock near the "Favorite," and it was not till the Captain had left the room that Charley remembered he had no second—a rather important item in a duel of the present day. But a *deus ex machinâ* soon appeared in the person of my old friend Bobadil, who, like a war-horse, scented a fray afar off, and would have gone a hundred miles at any time to be present at a duel—whether as principal or second was a matter to him of perfect indifference.

He came into the room jauntily humming that fine old tune of "Marlbrook," and lifted his hat with great dignity to Mr. Dashwood.

"I hope I don't intrude, Mr. Dashwood; but I just met Fitzspavin, who told me he fancied you had no second in your little affair, and suggested that I could be of service to you; if so, command me."

"I really am deeply indebted to you, for you have relieved me from a great difficulty. Pray may I ask whom I have the honour of addressing, though?"

"Oh! I forgot that trifling matter. Here is my card. I am pretty well known in connection with such affairs as these. Let me see, last year was it? Yes, this very time last year I winged Count Strumpfensels, who indulged in some impertinent remarks about my principal in that affair when the Russian prince was killed. But you were going to speak, I believe? Yes, I think some cold brandy and water would be very acceptable this hot weather. Pray allow me to ring the bell; don't disturb yourself."

During the consumption of the brandy the Captain tried to enliven Charley by giving him various accounts of sanguinary combats of two which had come off near Baden during the last twenty years, and then suddenly turned to him, saying, "Let's feel your pulse." The examination proved highly satisfactory, for he went on, "You'll do, my boy; pulse as calm as a sleeping infant. Well now, I don't mind lending you my family pistols. I wouldn't have done it, though, if I had any doubts about your mettle. I've known some fellows as nervous on their first

meeting as a young girl on her wedding-day; but, Lord bless you! they soon get over it. When you've been out as many times as I have, you'll feel it necessary for your health to have a fight now and then."

It was quite true Charley did not feel the slightest fear, although he had never fought a duel in his life more dangerous than with his fists. He only regretted that the morning had not already arrived, that he might punish the scoundrel who had dared to insult his Helen. After a long talk with the Captain, and arranging that he should call for him with a carriage at seven—Charley had suggested riding, but Bobadil pooh-poohed the idea, and told him he mustn't shake his nerves—they parted, the Captain saying,—

"And mind you dress all in black. Have no fadelsals about you to attract your adversary's attention. It's no use to throw any chance away; and besides, if any accident happens to you, you'll have gone into mourning for yourself beforehand."

And with this somewhat ghastly joke the Captain finished the brandy bottle, and walled out of the room with a firm step, no doubt believing himself a highly virtuous and respectable member of society. Charley, when left alone, made no preparations for a sinister result. In truth, he had not the remotest idea of being shot. He felt such a degree of indignation that he was confident he should punish the Marquis. He was for all the world like the avenging dei Franchi, whose mission it is to kill the Chevalier. Finding time, however, hanging somewhat heavily on his hands, he thought he might as well show at the rooms, and thus avert any suspicion on the part of the gendarmes; for, in police-ridden Germany, if you are not always visible you must necessarily be plotting mischief.

I wonder how it is that people can be found in this world who spend every night of their stay in Baden in watching the eternal rolling of the ball and the parrot-ery of *rouge gagne et couleur*. And yet it is perfectly true. Let the moon be shining ever so brightly, and wooing you to bathe yourself in her chaste light; let the most tempting excursion be proposed, those *habitues* of Baden to whom I allude would regard it as a sin if they allowed anything to interfere with their visit to the table. The groom-porters in the rooms are their chief friends, and they retire into corners with them, and talk mysteriously about the season when the red came up thirty-five times in succession, and nobody took advantage of it. Had it been the case what would have

become of *monsieur*? And this idea is so overwhelming that they leave off talking, as if they must meditate on the consequences in private. Generally, though, they are harmless old fellows, and if you can persuade them to talk with you they can impart some very valuable information.

But what a seedy, hang-dog lot are those gentry who come to Baden solely to play, and try those martingales which they have been studying all the winter, and which somehow always fail at the hour of need! What becomes of them as soon as the rooms shut up? They disappear from Baden with the croupiers, and turn up again with equal regularity. It is a mystery which I cannot solve. I am happy, though, that I once had occasion to call on a croupier in his private capacity at Paris, and I found him very comfortably installed, and he gave me a very capital dinner, and was altogether a well-bred and highly intelligent man. He was, however, ashamed of his profession, for he earnestly begged me not to drop a hint before his wife as to his summer avocations. She believed that he went to Baden for the benefit of his health.

But I am growing sadly parenthetical, and I daresay my readers care very little for the *rouge et noir* table when they are absent from it. I doubt whether it would be the same, though, were they close by. At any rate my hero was not proof against the magic spell, and, according to the old German rule of *Unglück in Liebe, Glück im Spiele*, he won a considerable sum perfectly unconsciously. He put down a five-franc piece hap-hazard, and, Captain Bobadil coming up at the time, he turned to talk with him, and forgot to notice what the fate of his piece was. Some ten minutes after, a sudden buzz of conversation attracted his attention to the table, and he saw a quantity of gold and silver money piled up where his solitary five-franc piece had been. The gamblers regarded him with intense respect, and a polite inquiry from the croupier whether he wished to stake the whole enlightened him on the fact that he was a very considerable winner. He picked up the money with great carelessness, and the next time the luck changed. After a few more turns of alternating fortune Charley retired for the night, not forgetting to pass beneath Helen's windows *en route*; but they were all darkened, and, in fact, the whole party were now comfortably settled at the Hôtel de Paris in Strasburg.

The Count had returned from Paris with the necessary funds, and was highly delighted at the sudden turn events

had taken. The retirement of the Marquis left the field open for his own operations on Helen's heart, and, in consequence, he rendered himself rather more disagreeable to her than usual by his intense politeness. Madame Leblanc, however, snapped him up very sharply, telling him to leave the child alone—she was not well; and Julie, who heard this remark with extreme gratification, paid particular attention to Helen for the rest of the evening. Poor girl! she sadly wanted some comforter in her present trials; but there was not much chance of finding that in the household of Madame Leblanc, where selfishness ruled predominant.

The morning broke cold and gloomy, as if nature were assuming mourning for the wicked deed that was to be done; and Charley felt thoroughly wretched as he drove along that dreary road to Oos, and looked out on the happy peasants tilling their fields. His night had not been so tranquil as he had expected; he had tossed restlessly on his bed, and could not drive away the thought that he was about to commit a great sin. That false sophistry which had sustained his wrath, and made him regard the punishment of the Marquis as a righteous deed, had been dispelled by calm reflection, and he could not conceal from himself that his motives, disguise them as he might under the false plea of honour, were murderous. And then the feeling would creep over him, struggle against it as he might, that he might fall himself; for, if every bullet has its billet, nothing guaranteed him against the possibility of his death warrant being signed. Under the influence of these sensations it may be supposed that his companion, with his cold, practical way of regarding duelling, was very repugnant to him, so Charles very churlishly wrapped himself up in his cloak and tried to feign sleep.

But the weariest road must have an end, and so the "Favorite" was reached at last. They passed the picket house in safety, and soon left the carriage beneath a clump of trees, and went in search of the enemy, who had reached the ground before them. The Marquis did not appear to have spent a very comfortable night either. In fact, he had sat up all night, keeping up his spirits with copious libations of brandy and water, and screwing his courage up to the sticking point. In reality, the chances between the opponents were unfair in the extreme. The Marquis, with his ten thousand a year, and his estates in every component of the Britannic Isles, was going to risk his life against a man who had his fortune still to make. To have rendered the

odds fair, he should have been armed with a revolver against his opponent's single barrel.

Still the sight of Charley spurred him into an extempore excitement, and he grinned villainously as he noticed the deep wale his whip had left on the young man's face; and this fiendish glance, I am sorry to say, roused all Charles's worst passions. All his generous scruples and determination not to fire at his adversary were dispelled, and murder, cool and premeditated, was the only feeling that swayed him.

The ground was quickly measured, and Bobadil produced his pistols with conscious pride. They were old, battered, clumsy-looking implements, with ominous notches and inlet plates of silver, indicating the numerous occasions on which they had done good service; but Captain Fitzspavin turned them about contemptuously, which brought a hot flush over Bobadil's face, and suggested that his own should be employed. These were of a very different description with hair triggers, and all the modern improvements of science; and even Bobadil was forced to allow that there would be some pleasure in being shot by such admirable pistols. "Playthings, though," he remarked; "they'll fire high, Dashwood; so aim low, and let fly as soon as your man is covered."

The opponents were placed in position, and the Marquis evidently quailed at the stern glance Charley fixed upon him. He drew himself up in a corkscrew fashion to offer the least possible angle to his adversary; but while doing so his hand shook, his finger touched the ticklish hair trigger; there was a sudden explosion and a yell of pain, and the Marquis fell. He had managed very cleverly to shoot himself through the foot. Charley fired his pistol in the air—against all rules of polite murder, be it said, for the word had not been given—and walked up to his fallen foe.

He held out his hand to him, and said with a blush, and yet in a firm, honest tone, "You see, my lord, the luck's against you; we had better shake hands and let the matter drop. I was, perhaps, too hasty yesterday, and I am sorry now that I struck you. You had evidently been drinking, and I was a fool to take you up so seriously. You will think better of it, and make an apology to Miss Mowbray, I am sure."

The Marquis bit his lip and tried to turn from the proffered hand; but the lad's honest face exercised an unwonted influence over him. After a short struggle he said,

" You're a doosid good fellow, Dashwood, and Helen's an angel. I behaved like a demnition cad, and I'm very sorry for it now." And the Marquis really felt for a few moments as if he would have got on better in the world with such a friend as Dashwood, instead of trusting so implicitly to Fitzspavin. Of course Bobadil could not keep silence in this touching reconciliation, so he began to protest that they had behaved like men of honour; and, if anybody doubted the truth of his statement, " he was quite at his service." The compliment was intended for the company, the threat for Fitzspavin ; but, as that gentleman was not in the habit of fighting unless he could derive some benefit from it, he most handsomely acquiesced in the truth of the remark, and they all left the ground apparently the best of friends.

When Charley returned to his hotel he found a letter awaiting him, which had been travelling from Oxford to London, and thence to Baden. It was from his uncle, Sir Amyas, and requested his immediate presence at Gürkenhof for the discussion of important family affairs. It was written in a far more cordial tone than had hitherto been the case, and among other important items requested the young man to bring with him a list of articles as specified, which could only be obtained in London. This list Charley forwarded to his friend Darcy, with instructions that they should be sent on immediately, and while waiting their arrival he wrote to Sir Amyas to account for his delay, and expressed an intention of being with him in the course of a week. That delay was pregnant with very fatal consequences, which my hero was far from anticipating.

In the meanwhile, however, he devoted a great portion of his time to sitting with the Marquis, whom he found to be really a decent sort of fellow, and he liked him the more for his evident affection for Helen. Milord Lancing was now able to appreciate her good qualities in the forced retirement of a sick room, and, I believe, was sincerely sorry that the Nessus-like trammels of conventionalism prevented him from making her his wife. But what would his relatives have said to such a *mésalliance*? What a rage would his mother be in if she thought he had proposed for a girl of low birth ! It is true that she had herself been an actress ; but she had so long been a marchioness in her own right, and had gained such influence over her son during a long minority, that I don't think he would have dared to offend her by marrying without her permission.

When the time came, however, for their parting, the Marquis cordially shook Dashwood's hand, and begged him to apply to him whenever he wanted a lift, which Charley promised to do in that vague, general way so usual with young men who have a great opinion of themselves, and believe that they will be able to carve their way to fortune and station without any external help.

CHAPTER X.

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

PENTGATE was in its glory. Not a trace of winter pinching was longer to be noticed on the faces of the smiling tradespeople; the lodging-house keepers who had temporarily intrusted their plate to the keeping of an uncle had long ago reclaimed it; in short, the unanimous cry was, "There never was such a season, and we shall all make our fortunes." Prices had risen to an extraordinary height, owing to the demand for rooms far exceeding the supply, and all the clergymen's widows, who seem by some beneficent law of nature to pass from the rectory to the seaside lodging-house, looked benignantly on the stranger who ventured to suggest that four pounds a week was rather high for a back bedroom on the third floor, which had originally been designed for a cupboard. There was not the slightest compulsion; if the gentleman did not like it he could please himself elsewhere, but such were their terms, and they could not think of taking less.

Now, what was the peculiar attraction possessed by Pentgate it would be difficult to say. It stood on a bleak south coast, which soon dissipated all dreams of a "sunny south" by fierce easterly blasts, or a steady, persistent drizzle which laughed mackintosh wraps to scorn. When the tide was out, the sands were wet and sloppy, and you caught a violent cold if you ventured on them; when it was in, your ramble was restricted to an exeruciating gravel-walk, against which no precautions could guard your favourite corn. The town itself looked like that human head joined to the equine neck which friend Horace objurgates; and you could scarcely restrain your laughter, as you beheld a magnificent series of crescents and piles of buildings, which stood as warnings to

speculators, unfinished and falling to decay on every available spot. In fact, Pentgate had been troubled with disquieting dreams of ambition at an early period of its history. A royal duke had once resided in the vicinity for six weeks, and, as the natural result, the speculative natives had immediately proceeded to erect a row of palaces suited for the contingent dukes who would honour their little town in future. Unfortunately, the royal duke forgot by the next season that such a place as Pentgate existed; and the buildings stood as a solemn warning "not to put faith in princes."

Some over-sanguine individuals, who would persist in believing that the first loss had not been the best, finished a portion of these mansions, which had then gone through strange phases of brick-and-mortar existence. First, they had been converted into hotels, with no other result than to send the landlords into the Bankruptcy Court; then they were turned into huge lodging caravanserais, but remained empty, because the proprietors asked such absurd prices. Their final and necessary transition was into boarding-schools, whose promoters promised the benefits of seaside air and a first-rate education for twenty pounds a year. The schoolmasters made some money out of their pupils; but the unhappy owners got but little out of the schoolmasters, and so this scheme eventually died out from sheer inanition.

At last the little town of Pentgate was taken by storm and held against all comers by an army of half-pay officers, with any quantity of children, who were continually engaged in making both ends of a very short purse meet. It then settled down into a sedate and respectable town, and began to believe that its mission was to serve as the refuge for genteel dulness. Old fogeydom reigned triumphant. The half-pay gentlemen, with their usual amiability, looked down with supreme contempt on any *pekin* who dared to come betwixt the wind and their nobility, and formed a serried coterie, which withstood all attacks of the invaders. By degrees, however, a small phalanx of retired tradespeople and lawyers was drawn up on the outskirts of the town, and these laid siege to the social Sebastopol, which for a long time resisted all their assaults. At length, by indomitable perseverance, some of the gentlemen entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the officers, and this led to an armistice between their families. The high contracting powers agreed that they would combine their efforts

to keep out any further interlopers, and thus Pentgate was to be defended against the outer barbarians. But the officers' ladies could not condescend beyond this. There was no marrying or giving in marriage between the two antagonistic classes; and, though the young people were compelled to dance together at the balls, the acquaintance was not carried beyond a bow on the promenade.

Now, this might be very satisfactory to the parties concerned; but the tradespeople could not but look on the movement as attacking their own vitality. It was not the fashion to deal to any very large extent with them, for the gentry considered, very unreasonably, that sugar was better without sand, and tea preferable direct from China than from the adjacent sloe-hedges, and they procured all their articles of consumption from London. The tradesmen, therefore, combined, on finding their profits daily diminishing, and determined on advertising Pentgate largely, as a retreat equally adapted for the contemplative philosopher and the dashing lady of fashion.

The hubbub this bold step aroused among the officers' ladies was fearful in the extreme, and they had serious thoughts of retiring *en masse*; but reflection taught them that such an expense would be attended with no beneficial result. Go where they would, those odious cockneys would annoy them; and perhaps Pentgate, as ten miles from any railway station, would be safe from the foe. In this, however, they were mistaken, and Pentgate for awhile seemed in a fair way to regain its pristine fashion. Old men rubbed their hands and talked about the "ducal season;" but, unfortunately, it was the old story of the "goose with the golden eggs." The more reputable visitors grew disgusted with exorbitant charges and the impertinence of the half-pay people, and did not return; and the last state of Pentgate soon became worse than the first. During the summer it was always crowded, it is true, for the number of watering-places within easy reach of London is limited; but the society which collected was not of the first water, and the half-pays were perfectly justified in keeping aloof with greater pertinacity than before.

Seduced by the advertisement to which I have alluded, and flattered with the prospect of quietude held out, Mr. Worthington had removed his household gods to Pentgate, where the family was located for the summer, ~~he~~ visiting them on every Saturday night, and returning to the office on Monday morning. The Miss Dashwoods had ~~both~~

greatly improved since their departure from Birchmere. Mr. Worthington had spared no pains or expense upon them, and they had really been working hard to make up for the deficiency in their education. In the meantime, however, Mr. James Worthington had found opportunities to whisper a very old, and yet ever new tale in Jane Dashwood's ear, and she had been graciously pleased to give him a hearing. In short, it was all settled that they were to be man and wife before they had grown too old to enjoy the blessings of wedded life.

Now, I daresay my readers will think Mr. Worthington, sen., very foolish for even listening to such a thing. Here was his son only just two-and-twenty, and the girl eighteen. He ought to have waited, at least, until his son had secured a position in society, and had a home prepared for his young wife equal to the one he was taking her from. But Mr. Worthington had a strong belief in the virtue of self-reliance. He had risen from the rank of office-boy to become partner, and then sole representative of that eminent legal firm, " Staples and Worthington ;" and he did not think that his son should speculate on what his father could give him, as our young men are too much in the habit of doing. Of course, he did not wish that his son should go through the same social gradations as himself—that was not necessary ; still he did not think it right that James should quietly step into his shoes without having done his manly *devoir* in proof that he was fitted to wear them. Hence Mr. James Worthington was now a clerk in a Manchester house, with a rising salary of £120 a year, and if he proved that he possessed the requisite energy, and wished to start for himself, his father would have no objection to furnish him with the funds required for that laudable object.

Now, had Mr. Worthington been a prudent man, he would doubtless have made an attorney of his son, and have had a successor in him ready made. But Mr. Worthington was a crotchety gentleman, as I daresay that my readers will already have noticed, and the greatest of his crotchetts was that our legal system is a curse to the country. On this point he would at times wax very eloquent, and make sarcastic remarks about fattening on the life-blood of the widow and orphan, and when he gave his wife a cheque for housekeeping expenses would remark, " You needn't be afraid to take it, my dear ; it isn't Judas' money. I sold up no poor people for law costs, nor have I done any social vampirism ;" and Mrs. Worthington would smile and kiss

Mr. Worthington affectionately, while she thanked God very fervently that her husband was not like the other publicans and sinners.

Now, it will naturally be understood by my readers, that, with such heterodoxical opinions, Mr. Worthington was not a rich man. In fact, apart from a few thousands he had saved up in his younger days, when he took a deeper interest in legal matters than at present, and had not examined so closely into the manner in which his partnership profits were obtained, he had only the fair income of the office to live upon. This money he determined not to touch, and he had settled it on his wife to secure her from penury, if he died before her. The office should expire with him, and thus there would be one less temptation for scoundrelism in the world.

But how to get the money to set his boy up in the world —that was a puzzler, and he thought over it long and anxiously. At last he consulted with his wife, and she, like a foolish woman, at once insisted that he should employ the money settled on her. She was quite sure her James would never see her starve, and she was only too happy to further her dear boy's interest by all the means in her power. How true is that French saying about it being only the first step that counts! Mr. Worthington had never speculated a sixpence in his life, and, now that he felt he was going to commit an injustice to his wife by using her money for his son, he began looking about for some new little plan by which he could double his capital at once, and so serve both without injury to either.

For a man who has money to lose there is no place where he can attain his object more easily than in London; and Mr. Worthington, shrewd as he was in other matters, was a mere babe in the hands of city men. He went through the usual routine; first he won a little, then lost a little; then he gained again, and finally, growing tired of such slow methods of gaining a fortune, he entered upon a nice little system of time bargains, with which he combined railway directorship. I need not add that within six months the seven thousand pounds were gone, with every shilling that could be raised on the security of the business, or by exchanging very worthless stamped paper for solid gold, and Mr. Worthington woke up one fine morning to find himself ruined.

It was too bad, and all for the want of two thousand pounds to *contango*. It was a moral certainty that the present

state of depression in the share market could not last: if he could only tide over this settlement he would be saved, and, once his own back, and, perhaps, something to boot, he would take an oath to leave off all speculation. But where to get the money——Avaunt, tempter! breathe not a word about that trust money belonging to the two girls. But why had Colonel Dacre left it in his hands for investment? It was now lying idle at his banker's: surely Providence had destined it as a means for saving him.

It is needless to recapitulate all the arguments Mr. Worthington used to reconcile his conscience, and thus at sixty he was preparing to devour the pittance of the orphans, against which he had been railing all his life. Mr. Worthington, in short, risked the money, and lost. He then woke up to the consciousness that he had been a scoundrel and a villain, and that the best thing he could do would be to shoot himself; perhaps that step would save his poor family from disgrace. And so this honest old man had gradually descended from his exalted position, had become a robber, and was going to consummate his crimes by self-murder. But he yearned to see his wife once more before he died: he could not leave the world at once without bidding farewell to the beloved partner of his past joys, and so, with a murderer's resolve in his heart, he went down to Pentgate, determined never to leave the place again alive.

Jane had noticed the sad change which had been going on in the once happy old man; but he had never been so strange as on this occasion. They walked on the Sunday afternoon to an adjacent village, where they attended church, and, after the service was over, Mr. Worthington had a strange fancy to examine the gravestones. One remote nook, where the unhonoured dead lay, particularly attracted his attention, and he expressed a strange wish to lie there. "You'll miss the old man, Jenny, when he's gone from you, I hope," he then went on to say, fondly stroking her hair; "but what does it matter where my old bones lie? Better thus than under a lying tombstone, which vaunts virtues which I never possessed. What does an old rogue like I am care for honourable burial? I ought to be too happy to escape being hung in an iron cage, like that Jerry Abershaw I remember seeing when I was a boy."

Jane began to feel very uncomfortable, and when she reached home imparted her fears to Mrs. Worthington; but that worthy lady, never having known trouble in any shape, was not inclined to feel anxiety about her husband

from the mere report of a silly child ; and the affectionate way in which he talked with her about old times soon relieved her mind of any latent apprehension about his sanity.

But mad Mr. Worthington certainly was, or else he would not have been standing before a looking-glass the next morning, with a razor in his hand and his throat bare, when Jane tapped at his door to summon him to breakfast, and, obtaining no response, stepped lightly in.

"Oh, Mr. Worthington, what can you be thinking of? What are you going to do with that horrid razor? Give it me directly ;" and, with a frantic bound, she tore it from his hand, and then sank into a chair and a violent burst of tears.

"Only going to rid the world of an old scoundrel, my dear, who has cumbered it too long," he replied very coolly.

"Oh, Mr. Worthington, how can you talk so? You must be mad, quite mad!" Jane added, stamping her foot passionately.

"Mad, my dear girl! I am as sane as you are; but when you hear that I have ruined you all, and robbed you of your fortune, I think you will hand me back that razor, and let me finish what I was about."

"And do you think, then, that any of us care about money in comparison with your life? Oh, dear guardian! I thought you were a religious man, but I am afraid I have been sadly deceived."

"Pooh, pooh, little girl, don't try to teach me. I tell you I have gambled away all your money, and I must pay the penalty with my life. They'll say I was suffering from temporary insanity, and all will be hushed up, while, if I live, I shall be pointed at as a robber—an ogre who devoured young girls. You don't know what you're talking about. Be off, and leave me at peace."

"Peace! There can be no peace when you have such wicked thoughts in your head. Suppose our money is gone—that is nothing. James will share his income with you, and many years of happiness will yet be in store for you."

Here was a situation ! Mr. Worthington, a man who had long attained years of discretion, to be tutored by a little chit of a girl! It was too absurd, and, worse than all, he was beginning to fancy she was in the right. After all, he thought, there was a better way of undergoing his punishment for his past sins than by running away from them, and the best way he could show his repentance would be by

working to support his family, instead of leaving them helpless.

I think my old friend was really mad all this time, and that, if he had reflected before, he would have come to this opinion sooner; but the idea of suicide had flattered him, and he had nursed it affectionately. He had regarded death as a glorious expiation for all the wrongs he had done; but at the voice of the gentle girl he gradually began to see the enormity of his offence, and that strong feeling of religion which had been his main stay through life again supported him. He therefore said very quietly, and without any attempt at the recklessness which he had assumed so much against his will,—

"There, there! you're a good little girl, and I'm an old fool. Don't be frightened; I am quite calm now, and you needn't be afraid of me any more. I'll go up to town, and have a talk with James, and we'll see what can be done in the matter. Perhaps things won't turn out so badly after all; so now we'll go to breakfast, and mind, Jenny, not a word about this to any one. You may trust me that I shall have no such thoughts again."

And thus, with their positions thoroughly reversed, the old man and the young girl went down hand in hand to the breakfast room, where Mrs. Worthington was gently wondering what had detained them so long.

When Mr. Worthington had once made up his mind to any right course of action, nothing would turn him from it. He therefore told his wife that sudden losses would probably compel a great change in their mode of life, and left her to prepare for the intended alteration. He then wrote to Colonel Dacre a manly and straightforward avowal of his conduct, which caused no slight surprise to that gallant officer, who, thinking that the loss of the girls' fortune was partly the result of his own neglect, promptly wrote to offer them a home. But they would not hear of leaving their friends, and it was a long time before Susan could be induced, by the persuasions of her elder sister, to accept the offer, and thus relieve them from the burden of her support.

But Mr. Worthington could not be induced by any remonstrances to continue his office. He said he was not fitted, after his one great fault, to give fair advice to honest folk who came to consult him. He would not again have any funds intrusted to his care, and so the only thing left was to sell off at once. The furniture at Mecklenburgh

Square was carefully inspected, and sufficient being saved to furnish a small house in one of the most back streets of Islington, the remainder was sold, and the family saved from an annoyance of debt, which is always in an inverse ratio to the amount. The man who owes £10,000 walks with head upraised through Regent Street, while he who owes 10,000 pence has to dodge round back ways, and take a careful survey of the street before he ventures beyond the safe seclusion of his front door.

As soon as the family had settled down in their new home, Mr. Worthington, sen., began to look about him for some employment. Of course he found nothing; for, though friends were bountiful in promises, an old man of sixty is not the most useful article to employ in an office. At length, wearied and worn out with hoping against hope, he made a sudden resolution to go to Australia, and no remonstrances were availing to keep him at home. He would not be a burden to his son; and so, finding that nothing would change his resolve, a sum of money was collected among friends to pay his expenses and allow him some money to exist upon, while Jane and James and mamma were to remain in England, and try whether they could keep the wolf from the door.

But, before the old gentleman started, he was determined to see his boy settled for life, and the marriage took place. Jane had no friends who cared to prevent it, and her brother, perhaps, was not sorry to have her off his hands, for his own troubles were commencing about this time; so in the month of October, and with the most suicidal weather, affording a bad augury of future felicity, they were married. A boy husband and a child wife took those solemn vows which made them one flesh, perfectly blind to the responsibilities that awaited them, and believing that they had a certain prospect of happiness in their love and one hundred and twenty pounds a year.

Within a week from the wedding old Worthington was undergoing all those atrocious penalties which await men who are bold enough to go down to the great sea in ships. Still he kept his spirits up wonderfully, and between the paroxysms of illness was bound to confess to himself that he had been an old fool to think of running away from the world, when he had such loving hearts still left to pray for him and hope in old England.

CHAPTER XI.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY POUNDS A YEAR.

THE young couple were now left to themselves to try the experiment of living on a limited annual income, though hitherto they had never known what the real value of money was. When Jane, therefore, had a sum of thirty pounds handed over to her for the first quarter's housekeeping, the only idea she formed was that it was a perfectly inexhaustible purse; and, as she was enabled to procure an amount of credit at starting, calculated on the apparent value of her furniture, things went on very pleasantly. So long as the money lasted, Jane thought there was no reason why she or her husband should begrudge anything in reason; and hence they were sedulous visitors to theatres and concerts, just as in the olden time; while Mrs. Worthington stopped at home to mind house. Then, on Sundays, her James liked a country excursion. Poor fellow! he was so fagged all the week at that horrid office. But all these things cost money; and, by a very simple process, at the end of two months Jane found herself without a shilling, and with a month to wait before any available funds were receivable. Now, this is the very worst position in which a young housekeeper can be placed; for although, by clever management in London, you can make an almost unbounded use of that blessed institution of credit, on which all our commercial transactions are based, there are a hundred domestic items which must be paid for. Under certain circumstances it is easier to buy a suit of clothes than to pay for having a pair of boots soled. James tried to stave off the difficulty by borrowing at the office; but this was a very finite resource. At length quarter-day arrived, and with it a very pretty little array of bills. Jane was perfectly horrified to find that they quite exhausted her money. What could she do now when she had three months to wait for more? This was a very embarrassing question for the young couple; and at last it was decided that James should pay a visit to his "uncle," and deposit in his temporary care the few jewels which Jane had as her mother's legacy. Now this is not the best way of correcting

improvident habits; and I am sorry to say that, before the second quarter-day arrived, a great many visits of the same nature had been paid, and a little sheaf of duplicates collected, which Jane would regard with blank amazement and almost comical despair.

It is very difficult for those who have been accustomed to habits of luxury to realise all at once the sudden transition to strict economy: they cannot be brought to understand why they must limit their wants by their income, or why they should not indulge in those things which have become almost a second nature to them. Mrs. Worthington was an invalid, too, by this time, owing to her continued worry about her poor husband, and the doctor had penetrated into the house. We all know how difficult it is to remove that leech till he has gorged himself with the blood of his victims. From aristocratic notions, too, they had sent for the old family doctor, who advised various expensive dainties to restore his patient's delicate appetite, and these must be procured at all risks, for both son and daughter could not allow their mother to notice that they were at all pressed for money.

With the third quarter Mrs. Worthington, junior's confinement was impending, and, as a necessary consequence, only a portion of the bills could be paid. The tradespeople, after some hesitation, consented to wait, and made up for the aunoyance of outstanding money by sending in bad goods at increased charges. Then a boy was born, and, though James was a pattern husband, and stayed at home for the first fortnight, performing the greater portion of the old gin-drinking nurse's duties, still there must be limits to human endurance, and he began to think cold meat four times running was a little more than he could stand; so he grew into the habit of dining out, and the invidious comparison he drew between the attention and cleanliness at his inn and the dirty maid of all work at home was not at all flattering to the latter. But the worst of all was that he began to find brandy and water a very excellent digestive after dinner, and very necessary for his health.

By the time Jane got about again the confusion at home was worse confounded, and she was sadly annoyed by duns. Then began a heart-breaking appeal to relatives for assistance, which was bestowed grudgingly, and at last refused, and James thought he would try his fortune in betting; so he began by sowing half-crowns broadcast at the betting offices which at that period disgraced our metropolis, and

though at times he won considerable sums, in many instances the proprietors had bolted when he went to receive it, and in others, when he did receive the money, it was not of much advantage to him in a domestic point of view. A slight gleam of hope came with an increase of his salary to one hundred and fifty pounds a year, but by this time they were inextricably involved in the net of debt.

At last James Worthington felt that something must be done, and that promptly; so by great persuasion he induced two friends to be security for him at a loan office, and he was enabled to borrow one hundred pounds. With this money a portion of the more pressing debts was paid off, but at the same time a fatal facility for incurring more obtained. First, the instalments were paid regularly enough, then he began to fall a little behindhand, and it was only with great difficulty he could recover lost ground. Finally, he had to give a bill of sale over his furniture, and that staved off ruin—for a time at least.

All this while poor Jane was experimentalising how she could reduce her expenses; but, although she purchased every new Cookery Book for the Million, and tried the series of receipts by which a household was to be supported for an infinitesimal sum, she generally found that she was not one halspenny richer in the end. Though she worked like a galley slave, and much harder than any servant would have done; though she went about in dresses which a servant would have disdained, still nothing was of any use—the expenses went on increasing and the comfort decreasing in geometric ratio.

And this is the very fact which will explain Jane's unhappy attempts at housekeeping: that little word "servant" will account at once for the wreck of her domestic comfort. In her ignorance of family matters she had been forced to trust to a servant, and that had, in great measure, caused her embarrassments. Jane was herself too confiding to suspect others of robbing her, and it was not for a long time that she detected that her servant was supporting a small family at her expense. When the proof was rendered palpable by a jealous policeman, who stopped the servant leaving the house with a leg of mutton, sundry loaves, and pats of butter, Jane cried at the depravity of human nature, paid the girl's wages, and sent her off. The next that came was honest, but equally stupid; and the waste she occasioned was just as expensive as the theft of the former servant. Then Jane tried the experiment of doing the household work

herself, with the assistance of an unclean old woman popularly known as a charwoman; but she was too fond of going round the corner for gin, and generally fell into the coal scuttle by six in the evening.

I need not dwell on this subject much longer. By the time Jane's second child was born she had degenerated into a slatternly, untidy woman, and her beauty was almost entirely destroyed by hard work and corroding care; while her husband was far too fond of drinking, and, consequently, of grumbling at the way in which he was worked at the office. The death of the old lady entailed fresh expenses upon them, and a distress levied by the landlord, which led to a most ignoble dispute about the value of the bill of sale, that was followed by James's arrest and confinement in Whitecross Street prison.

There was no other course open to him than a passage through the Insolvent Court. He went up, was opposed by a creditor or two, and remanded, the commissioner thinking it a very bad case that he should have incurred such debts with the excellent income he possessed. During his imprisonment Jane rubbed along, she hardly knew how, in a cheap lodging, tormented by fears about her children and the difficulty of procuring food. At last James was a free man again, and the world was all before him where to choose. He had no prospect of returning to his old office, and, indeed, his late conduct there had predisposed his employers against him, and he picked up a precarious livelihood by hanging about betting offices and public-houses, too proud to beg, and yet not ashamed to pester every friend from whom he could obtain a hearing for assistance.

Such was the melancholy termination of Jane's dream of wedded happiness. In little more than two years she was beggared, and regarded as a useless encumbrance by her once so affectionate James. And yet I can hardly say she is to be severely blamed for the result. Consider her youth and inexperience, and we must not judge her too harshly. But one thing is certain—so long as our girls are brought up in the present system, and are educated to become clerks' wives, with the wants and desires of ladies of fashion, so surely will such lamentable results be produced as I have had to describe in Jane Dashwood's case.

At length, when matters came to the worst, they began to mend, as usual. Susan, who was being carefully trained by Mrs. Dacre, by whom she was regarded as a daughter, persuaded the Colonel to come forward once more, and positively

WILD OATS.

for the last time, to assist her sister. By his interest young Worthington procured a situation in that last refuge for the destitute, a railway audit office; and, though the salary was only twenty-five shillings a week, it was paid fortnightly, and that was of wonderful assistance to the struggling pair. Having no longer such pressing necessity to forestall their income, and knowing the hopelessness of trying to run into debt, they lived within their income, and soon began to get straight again. A small house was furnished for them once more, and, chastened by their sufferings, they soon became happy and comfortable.

They had not been living thus for any great length of time when a long-expected letter arrived from their father. With his old obstinacy Mr. Worthington had not written until he had good news to impart, for he had no desire to make them uncomfortable on his account. Now that he had seized Fortune by one of her wings, and held her so tightly that she was obliged to make a compromise for her escape, he wrote the queerest possible account of his rambles. It seemed as if he had become a young man again to harmonise with his new home, and had tried every possible scheme before he could hit on the right one. He had been in turn solicitor's clerk, waiter at an hotel, then government employé, then had gone "up country" to look about him with some money he had saved. After awhile he had turned sheep farmer; but that did not suit him, although he allowed he made a very tidy sum at it. He had then gone down to Sydney again, and entered into business as a general merchant; but a sudden glut of the market ruined him, and he did not know where to begin again.

"At this time," he wrote, "when things were looking the bluest, and I didn't know exactly where to turn for a mouthful of bread, which is very difficult to get in Australia, my boy, unless you have some regular employment, and I was even thinking of entering the government service as stone-breaker, I felt a tap on the shoulder. It was a man of the name of Roper, whom I had known in London, and had been able to do him some slight service." (The old gentleman's modesty prevented him saying that in the course of business he had been obliged to put in an execution, but had been so moved by Roper's appeals for mercy that he had paid the money out of his own pocket.) "We had a jaw about matters, and he said he would be happy to do everything for me in his power. Well, to end a long story, I agreed to accompany him to his home at Stapleton, and I

had no sooner got there than I found the employment I had been looking for so long. I turned auctioneer. I got some money from Roper, and began selling for others and buying for myself. In the last year I have cleared £1500, and have a comfortable home, for my jokes please the people here, and nobody must sell for them except Mr. Worthington, K.H., or Knight of the Hammer. If you all like to join me, come at once; I have room for you all, and I consequently inclose a draft for £250, which I shall expect you to repay me out here, for it is part of Jane's fortune, remember."

There was much more in the letter, which testified to the old gentleman's indomitable pluck, and his son had no reason to doubt that he would be successful. A very slight amount of persuasion induced Jane to agree to accompany him to the promised land, and soon all their arrangements were made. Colonel Dacre again responded liberally to Susan's appeal, and, provided with all requisite comforts for the voyage, they started without regret from a country where unhappiness and misery had hitherto been their only portion.

In the meanwhile Susan had grown up into a very handsome girl. She was the darling of her new guardian, and could manage him just as she pleased. A life of comfort and luxury had a powerful effect in increasing her charms, and she was beginning to become the acknowledged *belle* of the country ball-room. Offers innumerable were made her by the young hawbucks, and even some superlative swells from the adjacent garrison town dismounted from the pedestal of their grandeur, and would have condescended to marry her. But Susan thought that her sister's experience of matrimony was quite sufficient for the family, and she kept all her suitors at defiance by saying that she could not leave Mrs. Dacre yet; and as the Colonel was only too glad to keep her by him, whenever he offered to advocate the claims of any young gentleman, he did so with such evident ill grace that Susan had no difficulty in declining their obliging offers. In vain did her young friends jokingly call her the "old maid," though in their hearts they felt very glad that she did not accept some of the offers made her, as she thus left the field open for them, and she was quite the darling of the whole country side.

But the Colonel would not have it thought for a moment that he was at all to blame for her determination, and he allowed her all the rational enjoyments her heart could desire. Even when he stood for the county, and was returned to

Parliament by a triumphant majority, he took her with him to town, and Clodshire had to lament long the loss of its fairest representative. Balls and parties claimed her as their own. She was presented at court, and excited a sensation. Her picture appeared on the walls of the academy, and in the now defunct pages of the "Book of Beauty," while the train of her adorers was wonderfully increased.

I do not think, for my own part, that she will adhere to her determination of dying an old maid; for though young ladies of one-and-twenty, who have nothing to wish for, are quite right in not recklessly exchanging the sure comforts of home for a share in the matrimonial lottery, which only too often proves a blank, still their determination is very frequently put to the right-about by some dashing young fellow of thirty, who has as many thousands as years, and a good heart worth more than all the rest; so I reserve Miss Susan Dashwood's future history for another chapter, and, until the exigencies of my story require her presence, she may be allowed to pursue the even tenor of her way as the fairest object in creation—a pure-hearted and lovely English girl.

I am sadly afraid that this episodical account of the Dashwood girls is a grave offence against the novelistic unities, and that I have run away from my hero in a clandestine manner. But he, poor fellow, is now standing on the threshold of life, full of hope and joy, secure of the future, and careless as every young man of twenty should be whose liver has not yet been affected. Seeing him so fully enjoying life and its pleasures—for this world is a very jolly place, let cynics rail against it as they will—I really had not the heart to bang the door rudely in his face, and bid him go work for that livelihood which he had hitherto thought would come to him, like fortune, in his sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

GURKENHOF.

If a committee were appointed to examine into the present state of our diplomatic service, I do not think it would have occasion to go further than Gürkenhof in its investigations, in order to discover that our expensive establishments at

the small German courts might very safely be abolished without compromising the honour of the country or the tranquillity of the universe.

Pumpernickel, of which grand duchy all the world ought to know Gürkenhof is the capital, could not by the wildest potentialities ever become of the slightest importance in regulating the European balance. It was a narrow *enclave* thrust in between two powerful neighbours, whose jealousy of each other had hitherto prevented its erasure from the map of the continent. Its army in war time amounted to 849½ men, the fraction representing a drummer; while in peace it consisted of 145 officers, from a general downwards, and 87 men to perform the requisite guard mountings. And yet it is wonderful what an amount of intrigue had been expended to bring Pumpernickel over to the side of the various contending powers; and it might almost be imagined that the weight of its tremendous glaive cast into the balance would “crumple up” the other side at once without any appeal to arms.

Somewhere in those benighted ages, when England thought that it conduced to her dignity to ally her royal house to German princes; while Hanover was still a thorn in our side, and even before that glorious old scoundrel, Frederick the Great, or the “Protestant hero,” as Mr. Barry Lyndon tells us our ancestors loved to call him, had cast his longing eyes on the Silesian dominions of his Catholic neighbour—a Raugrave of Pumpernickel had married a niece of our mighty monarch. A large annuity was required to gild the somewhat bitter morsel; but that the nation (which, by the way, did not trouble itself much about such matters then, *pour cause*), did not consider at all derogatory. I believe it was Walpole who moved the bill in the lower house, and one member, who referred it to a select committee, after a very private and satisfactory conversation with his ministerial opponent, saw the error of his ways and retracted. This money was very useful to the Raugrave, for he was gifted with a taste for building, and Gürkenhof soon became a sort of German Versailles. He had a palace to reside in weekly, and mistresses to match, and was in every respect a father to his people.

In imitation of his neighbour in Baden, who had recently built Carlsruhe in the shape of a wheel, the Raugrave decided that his *residenz* should assume the appearance of a sedan chair, the body being depicted by the huge palace in the centre, and the staves representing the streets leading

up to it, while the people groaning beneath the weight o taxation served admirably for the porters who carried th unwieldy burden. I must do the Raugrave the credit however, to add that, although he behaved as badly as onl a king can do to his wife, he built her an English palace where she was quite at liberty to reside, and regret that sh had ever quitted her home to share the pinchbeck splendou of a German principality.

Through this marriage a sort of traditional alliance witl England was established. When we wanted troops th Raugraves were only too glad to supply regiments for consideration, and we were on very friendly relations witl the Pumpernickelers, much to the gratification of ou Anglo-German ruler. Of course the French were not dis posed to allow this to go on ; so they soon augmented their embassy, put a duke at the head of it, and determined to cut the English out. A glorious crop of intrigues ther sprang up; the English were lavish with money, the French with promises; and the Raugrave, wise in his gene ration, had only to indicate his intention to change his policy in order to procure a subsidy.

Whatever our relations with France might be, whether at peace or war, the treaty was tacitly understood not to ex tend to Gürkenhof: there the hostilities never ceased, bu squabbling reigned triumphant. So matters had gone or for more than a century; and when the common sense peculiar to England by slow degrees drove into our minis ters the absurdity of spending such immense sums on such a wretched subject, they only altered the system so far as to lower the embassy one or two degrees, and appointed Sir Amyas Dashwood our envoy, with a very satisfactory in come of £2000 per annum.

On the morning when the interests of my narrative com pelled me to pay a flying visit to the *residenz*, Sir Amyas was going through the same routine to which he had been accustomed for the last twenty years. He was seated in a splendid room of the English palace, which had been given up for our embassy when the annuity had terminated, sipping a cup of chocolate, and turning over the various reports and letters which were intended to be seen only by himself.

Sir Amyas, it was evident at the first glance, must have been a very handsome man in his youth, and now that he had fallen into the sere and yellow leaf he did not destroy the favourable impression he produced by any affectation

of old boy dandyism. He was tall and rather thin, with a handsome Grecian profile, and that clear, cold blue eye which betrays a pitiless determination and unbending will. I believe he was the last Englishman who wore *jabots* and ruffles, which were always spotlessly white. Next to himself the most important personage in Gürkenhof was his laundress. He was proverbial for never having broken his word to a man, and never keeping it with a woman. In short, I do not know how better to describe him than as a perfect imitation of the Chesterfield of "Letters" celebrity, *minus* the falsehood. His heart was thoroughly eaten up with pride, self-conceit, and wickedness; while he was popularly regarded as one of the best specimens of the old school, when "manners, not men," was the prevailing theory.

The envoy was dressed in a loose mulberry velvet dressing-gown, and lay back in the cosiest of arm-chairs. Within easy reach was a set of bookshelves on wheels, containing all the lighter literature which flatters the head while ulcerating the heart. The walls of this his private apartment were hung with a choice gallery of Venuses, the value of which removed all idea of their impropriety; and a quantity of china peculiarly ugly, and therefore extremely expensive, encumbered every vacant spot. But the most interesting corner of the room to me, when I was admitted to the envoy's august presence, was always a rack of meerschaum-pipes, hanging in wash-leather bags to protect them from the atmosphere, with their jewelled cherry stems artistically arranged in the corner. In women and in pipes Sir Amyas was equally profound; and I think that he would sooner have forgiven a flaw in the first than in the last.

The little table that stood in front of Sir Amyas was at this moment covered with an extraordinary quantity of missives, from which he proceeded to select with a practised eye those which deserved his attention. A quantity in female handwriting he threw aside with a negligent pshaw, to become gravely interested in a report from his confidential spy at court. The perusal of this seemed to amuse him greatly.

"So," he muttered to himself, "the Grand Duke fancies he will become my rival with the fair Amalie; she supped with him last night on oysters and champagne *tête-à-tête*. Well, I'm sure he's heartily welcome to her; she was shockingly extravagant, and talked abominable French. And they made merry, did they, about Sir Dashwood?"

Very good; I must take my measures to punish her for that."

And, as he walked across the room to touch a handbell, you could notice that he was slightly lame; but the defect was not at all disfiguring.

"Fritz," he then said to the valet who entered, "send for the Baron von Strudelwitz—say I wish to see him at once."

"Your Excellency, Fraülein Amalie has just driven up, and wishes to speak to you for a moment."

"Let her come up, then; and when she is gone you can go for the Baron."

The Fraülein was the principal singer at the opera, and had gained considerable influence over Sir Amyas, for awhile at least; but, as he had hinted, he was now growing tired of her. As, too, she had thought proper to laugh at him, he was terribly offended; but not a glance betrayed his annoyance when she came in. On the contrary, he was most affectionate, laughed heartily at her stories of the coulisses, and ended by giving her a rouleau of *louis d'or*, which she wanted for her new dresses in the opera of *Don Giovanni*, which had just been commanded by the court for the next week.

"By the way," Sir Amyas said negligently, "the little Durlacher is to play Zerlina, is she not?"

"Ah bah! what does she know about singing? That for the Durlacher!" giving her fingers an indescribable fillip. "She'll make a *fiasco*, I can promise you; the Baron will see to that."

"Well, you are quite right, Amalie, not to give her a chance, for I noticed the *Abend Blatt* says your voice is getting worn, and a new *prima donna* is required."

"That poor Hegwitz! he thought he could gain my heart by puffing me; and, now that he has found out his mistake, he threatens to demolish me. Aha! I should like to see a new singer succeed here; I'd tear her eyes out!"

And with these words the amiable young lady quitted the room, sending some flying kisses from the tips of her fingers to the envoy, who laughed heartily at her threat. The Baron soon made his appearance, and Sir Amyas, after paying him some elaborate compliments about the way in which he conducted the theatre, added:—

"I take an interest in that little Durlacher who is going

to give a *gastrolle* in Zerlina. Poor little thing! she seems rather bashful, and she must be encouraged."

"Certainly, your Excellency; I quite agree with you, and I will take care that the theatre is filled with discreet claqueurs, who shall applaud her."

"And, Monsieur le Baron, if I might suggest, there would be no harm in giving the director of the orchestra a hint. If he were to play *fortissimo* when Fraülein Amalie is singing, and so drown her roulades, I think it would not do her any harm. The young person is growing negligent, and the lesson may be of service to her. Of course, I speak thus because the interests of your theatre may be eventually at stake; and if you will have the kindness to forward this bracelet to the Durlacher, not mentioning from whom it comes, but requesting she will wear it on the evening of her *début*. I shall feel extremely obliged. A glass of Curaçoa? No; too early. Good-bye, then, my dear Baron, *au revoir!*"

When the envoy was left alone he grinned most diabolically, and repeated to himself, "Come, I think Amalie will be pretty well punished for her impertinence. She wanted that bracelet some time back, and I know her devilish jealousy so well that when she sees it on the Durlacher's arm she will not be able to sing a note for malice. The Durlacher will gain an immense amount of applause; the Grand Duke will be pleased with her—and then he shall have an opportunity to rival me again. But now for my letters; I am anxious for that boy to come, or the opportunity will be lost. But here's a letter from Harlingsby, dated Baden. I wonder what scandal he has picked up. Aha! things look serious. That worthy nephew of mine has been fighting a duel with the Marquis of Lancing about some woman whom he's supposed to be in love with. Well, I hope it's nothing serious. But what's this? A daughter of Madame Leblanc, a gambling-house keeper in Paris. That woman was born to be my curse. It must be the girl whom my brother took into his family. What confounded folly! I was afraid of something of this sort; but it must be stopped at once. Ah! here's a letter from the boy to say he is coming next week. Well, we shall see which is the stronger, his love or my will."

And, grown perfectly calm again, as if it were impossible for his designs to be thwarted by any earthly agency, Sir Amyas rang for his valet, and went through the necessary operations of the toilet. He then entered his carriage

and drove to the palace, where he was the life of the family party for nearly an hour by telling very funny anecdotes, which he had picked up during his morning's reading, and which made the young Princess Bertha still more in love with the dear old gentleman, to whom she chattered in her pretty broken English. The Grand Duke was always glad for Sir Amyas to join them, and give his daughter an English lesson; for, as a provident papa, he looked benignantly on the increasing royal family in England, and had made up his mind to enter his little daughter for the matrimonial stakes.

From the palace Sir Amyas proceeded to call on the Countess von Tulpenbain, the Grand Duke's left-handed wife, who had originally been a milliner at Paris, and was now the second power in the duchy, without whose advice the reigning prince never could make his mind to any course of action. She was a staunch ally of the English party at court, and, indeed, enjoyed a very comfortable pension out of that secret service money annually voted by Parliament in the teeth of Mr. W. Williams's repeated protestations. With her Sir Amyas chatted delightfully about various court matters; how the Russian ambassador had been closeted with her husband for two hours, and that she meant to find out what the conversation had been about; next a discreet allusion to the little supper party of the previous evening served to arouse the Countess's jealousy, and make her a stanch ally of the Durlacher; and then, feeling that he had done a good morning's work, Sir Amyas drove placidly back to his hotel, and prepared for the grand dinner party he was going to give that evening in honour of one of our princesses' birthdays.

But it is unnecessary to dwell any longer on the routine of Sir Amyas Dashwood's daily life; the specimen I have given will be sufficient to enlighten my countrymen as to the way in which their interests are served, and their money spent, at the smaller German courts. In fact, I do not see what else Sir Dashwood could do to fill up his time. The alliance with Pumpernickel was no longer a vital consideration, for Hanover had fortunately been lost to our crown, and the interests of that valuable country confided to the safe keeping of an independent and dearly-beloved monarch. But, so long as family ties are all-powerful, and the sons of our aristocracy have to be supported at the public expense, so long, I presume, the present system must be maintained; and, if this be the case, I do not see why Sir Amyas was

one bit worse or better than any other individual who might be selected. He was magnificent in his habits, and a thorough gentleman as far as externals were concerned ; he kept up the dignity of England at the proper standard by capital dinner parties ; and the young attachés were indispensable at all balls, and to figure to a large extent in the tradesmen's books. After a due course of flirting and dancing their diplomatic education would be completed, and they would be prepared to fill any vacancies which occurred at larger embassies.

But, to tell the truth, there was nothing for them to learn. A Mr. Markham, a fellow of no birth, whom they treated with consummate politeness, and never associated with, really did all the work of the *chancellerie* ; and any unfortunate Englishman who was compelled to apply to his embassy for assistance in any dilemma was only too glad, after one conference with these noble young men, to fall back upon the useful clerk, from whom he received advice without that superciliousness which appears to be the be all and end all of an English attaché's existence.

It will be seen from these slight hints, I trust, that our embassy at Gürkenhof, if inferior in status to the others which stud continental capitals, was not one whit behind-hand in the diplomatic amenities ; and, having proved so much, I may only add that Sir Amyas amused himself for the rest of the evening in a manner befitting his high birth and exalted position, and, as dean of the corps, gave his colleagues a remarkably good dinner, which I hope agreed with them. So, with a wish that good digestion may attend on appetite, and health on both, I will leave them to the enjoyment of their rissoles and their delicious trout, while the necessary changes of scenery are being prepared for the grand tableau between my hero and Sir Amyas.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXPLOSION.

Poor Charley! He could hardly have arrived at Gürkenhof at a more unpropitious moment, for Sir Amyas was suffering from a severe attack of gout, which, though not confining him to the house, rendered him rather more disagreeable than usual. Besides, as he was obliged to confess that he had brought it on himself by an extra quantity of wine on the evening of his dinner party, he was now vexed with the whole party “of guzzling mountebanks,” as he termed them in the innermost recesses of his mind, and was very pleased at any opportunity for the safe discharge of his spleen.

But nothing of this was perceptible in his manner of receiving Charley, which was courteous in the extreme, and, if anything, almost too polite for so near a relative; at least it seemed so to Charley, who had hitherto only been accustomed to the unrefined greetings of loving sisters, and, as a consequence, could not appreciate the exquisite tact by which Sir Amyas wished to convey that, although nature had constituted him a relative, it depended on his behaviour whether that accidental connection would be recognised. Sir Amyas was constitutionally averse to any demonstrative friendship; for his rule of faith was that friends were only sent into the world to ask you to do them favours. Hence it was very rarely that he went so far as to give more than two of his fingers to any one, and, if he did go beyond this, so slight was the grasp, and so clammy the touch, that the recipient of this favour was only too glad to revert to the old system.

I think, therefore, that the old-fashioned kiss on the right cheek, after the manner of royalty, with which Sir Amyas greeted his kinsman, was a considerable departure from his usual rule, and was probably occasioned by some better thought tapping at what he flatteringly termed his heart for admission. And, in truth, few persons could look on my hero without feeling attracted spontaneously toward him. And this reminds me that I have hitherto neglected to introduce him to my reader; but this was not an oversight on

my part, for had I described him feature by feature when we first formed his acquaintance, the likeness would have borne no resemblance to the young man as he now stood modestly, and yet with full consciousness of his manhood, before his uncle. But with a wish to gratify my lady readers, and afford them an opportunity of comparison between my hero and their own ideal of the manly type of beauty, I will here describe him.

In his face, then, he was a true Dashwood, with the same Grecian nose and exquisitely chiseled mouth. His eye, too, was blue, but of a darker hue than his uncle's, and beaming with good-nature, while the somewhat too classical expression was redeemed by two pouting lips, rich with the ruddy hue of health, and slightly parted to display an admirable row of teeth. The dimples in his cheeks proved that he was prone to laughter, and there was a certain look about him which revealed that he was very apt to regard the ludicrous side of human nature. His hair was of a magnificent chestnut colour, and had a natural wave in it which is peculiar to negroes and the latest feminine fashions. Had it not been for the severe coldness of the outline, his lips might have suggested a sensuous predisposition, but as it was they gave a charming expression to his face, while his slight moustache took off that idea of effeminacy which we are apt to associate with the purely Greek type, such as may be studied to perfection in the back slums of Galata.

Such was our hero, then, as he stood on the threshold of life, beaming with hope and expectation ; and I am not surprised that Sir Amyas thawed visibly on first seeing him. He had feared that the boy might be too like his father, and was prepared to hate him in consequence ; but his features were so relieved by the expression of humour I have alluded to, that Sir Amyas was unable to detect the resemblance, and half formed a villainous hope that he was not his father's son. But in this he was fated to find himself undeluded.

A splendid suite of apartments had been held in readiness for my hero, quite distinct from the rest of the household, and he could take his ease in them as if at an inn. Sir Amyas, after introducing him to the attachés, informed him that he was at liberty to amuse himself as he pleased until eight o'clock, when he intended to take him to court, and bowed him most politely out. As soon as he was left alone Sir Amyas, however, hastened to his writing-table, and penned a charming note, which he addressed to the Honourable Mrs. Delaney *en ville*, and sent off by Fritz to its destination.

My hero certainly felt that some inches were added to his stature by the polite attentions paid him on all sides in his uncle's palace, and he began to think there were duller places in the world than Gürkenhof. Mr. Pelham, the paid attaché, kindly offered to give up his arduous duties for the afternoon on his behalf, and with him he explored the *penertralia* of a German residenz. While wandering in the palace gardens the attaché bowed to two ladies, evidently English, the younger of whom was eminently lovely, and so Charles' eyes were fixed upon her a second or two longer than good breeding might permit, at which the young lady blushed very prettily and passed on. The next minute he blamed himself for such false fealty to his Helen, and magnanimously decided not to ask his companion who the ladies were, and the other gentleman not volunteering the information, the meeting soon slipped from his remembrance.

In the evening, when Sir Amyas had received special permission from the Grand Duke to present his young kinsman *en famille*, Charles, on going up the grand stairs, was rather amused at seeing all the magnificent men-servants quarrelling in an anteroom over golden dishes, and snatching the contents with greedy fist. He, however, said nothing, as his uncle passed on without paying the slightest attention, and Charles soon found himself in close contact with royalty for the first time in his life.

The Grand Duke, a fine-looking man, though evidently somewhat troubled with a tight uniform, which gave a mottled look to his complexion, received my hero most graciously, and addressed several questions to him in French, which the poor lad, so embarrassed as he was, could scarcely reply to. However, that was of very slight consequence; the duke went through the usual routine, then bowed, and the audience was over. Charles by this time had found courage to look round him, and notice that the rooms had been very handsomely furnished at one time, but now bore evident traces of decay; the festooned curtains had broken down in several places, and the whole place had a very casinoish look about it, *minus* the glitter of freshness. On his road home he ventured to ask Sir Amyas the meaning of the curious scene he had noticed in the anteroom, and learned that the grand ducal servants were all on board wages, and the crumbs that fell from their master's table were their own perquisites. As, however, they were all a set of robbers, they preferred to take time

by the forelock, and victual themselves before the dishes returned to the royal kitchen. On their return to the palace Sir Amyas dismissed Charles graciously for the night, the remainder of which he spent with the attachés—how it is needless for me to particularise.

Two days passed over without Sir Amyas volunteering a word about the important family matters for which he had summoned Charles to Gürkenhof; but on the third the young man was requested to join his uncle. He found him ready dressed to go out, and was requested to accompany him on a visit he was about to pay. Charles, of course, made no objection, but followed, and soon found himself in the presence of the two ladies whom he had met in the park, the younger of whom testified by a vivid blush that she, at least, had not forgotten their previous meeting. Mrs. Delancy received him with visible *empressement*, and there was an evident disposition on all sides to make him feel at home.

Mrs. Delancy was a widow with one daughter, whom she had tried to marry to some rich nobleman in England; but there were some curious stories afloat about the mamma, and our young men fought shy. Finding her expenses rapidly increasing, and grave inroads made on her fortune by a lengthened residence in London (for, although it be true that “beauty when unadorned is adorned the most,” milliners’ bills are absolutely necessary for the loveliest daughter of Eve), the widow had next tried her hand on the continent. For a long while she had fished for heirs apparent to duchies, or princes reigning in their own right, although perfectly aware of the impossibilities of effecting anything beyond a morganatic marriage; but to this neither mother nor daughter objected. But, try all they knew, they could not succeed, and they had lowered their pretensions. It was very hard on the young lady certainly, for she was the perfection of loveliness, and had thirty thousand pounds in the bargain; but so it was. At last they happened to come to Gürkenhof, and laid siege at once and mutually to the heart of Sir Amyas, whose position was not to be despised; for, if he were not the rose, he had lived beside it so long that he had gained a large portion of the fragrance. But Sir Amyas was not a marrying man, and he effected a compromise by proposing his nephew, who, in the due course of nature, would succeed to the title and estates—if there were any. To this proposition the lady, negotiating on behalf of her daughter, consented; and when Charles arrived at Gür-

kenhof, they regarded him in the light of Flora's future husband.

Not a word of this was breathed to Charley, for it was desired that it should be a marriage of inclination; so time and opportunity were to be afforded him for falling into love. When a young and exquisitely beautiful girl has made up her mind that a certain young man shall be her husband, I am afraid that he has but a poor chance of resisting the snare; and, had not Charley's heart been triply fenced by his affection for Helen, whom he loved the more intensely now, because there was an opposition to their happiness, I fancy Miss Flora would have had the game in her own hands. I must confess, however, that my hero was most culpable for paying such exclusive attentions to the young lady, and thus spoiling the chance of the attachés. He was her daily companion in her drives and walks, was constantly by her side in the ball-room, and, in short, made a fool both of her and himself. It is true that all this time he salved his conscience by not breathing a word of love; but then—hang it all!—he looked it the more, and his eyes were so expressive that they were possibly more effective than his tongue would have been. At any rate, Flora lived on in the happy delusion that Charles loved her, and was innocently contriving a multitude of schemes for allowing him to declare his passion.

Now I feel that this was all very wrong. Charley, as a moral young man, ought to have resisted the delicious temptation. He should have remembered how faithful Helen had been to him before recent events had forced her to thrust him from her side, and, at any rate, ought to have tried to remove the delusion which was causing her such intense agony of mind. I will allow all this, but unfortunately, as the French tell us, "the absent are always in the wrong," and Charley would have been a block of ice had he remained impassive to the bewitching lures of the syren by his side. In fact, I am sorry to say he never thought on the matter at all, or very rarely; and, when he did so, he laughed it off, with a very uncomfortable feeling, though, and still kept by Flora's side.

We may be sure that Sir Amyas and Mrs. Delancy held frequent consultations as to the progress of this love passage; and the lady, with feminine impetuosity, would have precipitated matters, but Sir Amyas was too cautious. He had not gone through life without bowing down before the influence of a first love, and though he was delighted to find

that Charley seemed quite oblivious of that Leblanc girl, still he would not by any hurried alarm startle his young heart from its security. Sir Amyas waited for some extraneous impulse to lead him into an avowal of his passion, and when the time grew too long he recommended that Flora should pay a little more attention than usual to her fervent admirer, the Baron von Strudelwitz. Perhaps that might render his nephew jealous, and if so the game would be won.

Strange to say, this did not succeed as the conspirators anticipated. Charley allowed the Baron to pay what attentions he pleased to Flora, and only revenged himself by joking the girl good-humouredly about her new admirer; and, though she was at times ready to cry at his stoicism, she was forced to smile in spite of herself at the quaint remarks Charley made about the unfortunate Baron. Another change of tactics was evidently required, and Flora determined this time that she would take the game into her own hands.

But how she was to attack this extraordinary lover was the difficulty. He was nothing like the usual run of young men, who, according to her experience, were too ready to avow their love for her, while the man she really was fond of would turn off every serious conversation by a joke. It was too childish, and she wished for a moment or so that she had never seen him; but the thought of Charley's honest, handsome face recurred to her, and her pettishness was dissolved at once like morning dew by the sun. But while she was cogitating this all-engrossing subject, and wondering how she was to bring Charley to an avowal of his sentiments, the Gordian knot was solved in a manner most unexpected by her.

Charles had returned from the opera, where he had been applauding the Durlacher, who excited a *furore*, owing to Sir Amyas' skilful combinations, to a supper with the young attaches. He had been very merry, and had good-humouredly borne a good deal of joking about "Flo" without wincing, which I think proves he must have been tolerably heart-whole. On entering his own apartments, however, he found a letter on his table which caused an utter revulsion. It was wonderfully concise; it merely said, "Brother, come—I want you;" but the effect the well-known handwriting produced was startling. He felt that some great event was impending over his beloved Helen, and he bitterly regretted the time he had so recklessly wasted at Flora's side, and the comparison he mentally instituted between her and Helen

was far from flattering to the former. With his usual impetuosity, however, he did not wait to reflect on his best course of conduct, but rushed out into the corridor, and inquired whether his uncle had yet retired to bed.

Fritz looked with some surprise at the young man, who bounded upon him with such evident traces of evil intelligence in his face; but in that house it was not the fashion to feel astonished at anything, so he merely said he would see if his Excellency were yet up, and in a few minutes Charles was standing in the presence of his uncle.

That worthy gentleman was seated in the fauteuil, smoking a long meerschaum, and deeply interested in Petronius Arbiter. Charles hurriedly apologised for his intrusion, and then said that important business required his immediate presence in Paris.

"And pray may I ask its nature?" said his uncle, slightly raising his eyebrows. "It must be important, indeed, that you should disturb me at this hour in the morning. Has the fair Flora requested you to procure her the last new novel instanter, while you, like a *preux chevalier*, would be only too ready to fly to the end of the world to pluck a hair from the beard of the great Cham?"

This very simple query considerably bothered Charles, for he could not exactly enter into particulars without explaining his love for Helen, and he felt that his uncle would not be particularly gratified at hearing of that.

"Well, young gentleman, I am waiting patiently. It cannot be—But, pshaw, it is impossible you could be such a fool as to throw away a brilliant *parti* like Miss Delancy for an outcast from society like Madame Leblanc's daughter—that common scandal of Baden."

If Sir Amyas desired to find out the truth he could not have hit on a better plan. Charles started as if shot, but Sir Amyas calmly motioned him to silence, and then continued:—

"Mr. Charles Dashwood, I never quarrel. In the first place it disharmonises digestion, and, secondly, it is but a fool's argument at the best. You will, perhaps, bear in mind that *your* father, for marrying a portionless girl, was almost disinherited by *my* father; and what became of him? He died a beggar, after wasting his life in an obscure country village. I took your part, and was—indeed, am still—ready to promote your interests; but you must obey me. I have chosen a wife for you against whom you can raise no objection, and her fortune, added to what I should

leave you, would enable the last of the Dashwoods to represent his family worthily. I only want a plain answer to one question. Will you marry Miss Delancy?"

"But, Sir Amyas —"

"As I said before, I am not disposed to enter into any discussion. I am quite well aware of your past folly with reference to this Miss Mowbray, and was prepared to overlook it. I regret that you should force me to revert to it now. There is a very simple choice left you: marry Miss Delancy and be my heir, or run after your highly virtuous Miss Mowbray and be a beggar. I do not require an answer now. You can sleep on it, and I have no doubt about your decision."

"If I thought over the matter for months my resolve would be as fixed then as it is now. I love Helen Mowbray, and if you but knew her you would be sorry for the unjust opinion you have formed of her. Oh, uncle! be merciful to me. Do not ask me to give up the only mainstay I have. I have been reckless, careless, improvident, if you will; but the remembrance of my Helen has kept me in the right path. I cannot marry Miss Delancy."

"Then there is no need for further conversation. Mr. Charles Dashwood, I have the honour to wish you good night, and you have my perfect permission to go to the devil your own road."

Charles saw too clearly that no humiliation on his part would turn his inflexible uncle, and, indeed, his feelings at the time were so outraged that he would not have yielded one jot, although his fortune was at stake. He therefore quitted the room, but had scarcely reached the corridor when his uncle's voice recalled him.

"Would you have the great kindness to tell Fritz to bring me the colchicum? and will you shut the door after you? There is a cold draught from that passage. Thank you; good night!"

And so uncle and nephew parted, never to meet again in this world; and Charley, with a consciousness that he had acted for the best, although he had to pay a bitter price for it, went and packed up his things, fully determined not to remain for an hour longer than necessary under the roof of a relative who could bid him go to the devil and good night in the same exquisitely modulated voice.

If he had any lurking hope that his uncle would recall him and rescind his determination, that was quite dissipated when Fritz tapped at the door the next morning to ask at

what hour he would wish the carriage to be in readiness to take him to the station. The sooner the better for him he thought; and thus, while Miss Delaney was gently pouting and wondering why Charles had not yet called, according to his promise, to ride with her in the park, that gentleman was hurrying with the iron lungs of steam to the assistance of his imperilled Helen.

The blow Flora's vanity experienced by this abrupt secession was very acute—I do not say her heart, for that had grown to the toughness of leather during her matrimonial campaign; and, after rather an angry scene with Sir Amyas, which that gentleman endured with the calmness of a stoic, the ladies also prepared for their departure, and Gürkenhof knew them no more.

CHAPTER XIV

MICHING MALLECHO.

IN a narrow court leading out of a back street in dangerous proximity to Leicester Square, an enterprising Levantine, of the mellifluous name of Nicolo Zampa, had established, at the period to which my story relates, a home for all nations. The lodging was somewhat scanty, it is true, and those benighted foreigners, who were seduced by Nicolo into paying him a weekly stipend for board, began soon to grow tired of boiled vetches and mastic, which he dispensed liberally at the expense of his guests' digestion. As a compensation for this, however, Nicolo always had a magnificent supply of dominoes, which were rattling on the slate tables from morning till night, and over which the hirsute foreigners gesticulated and swore, as if their very existence depended on the bone selected to be played.

The ingenious Mr. Doyle need not have gone further than this hostelry to collect those inimitable physiognomies which so delight us in his travelling Englishmen, for, of a verity, every type of foreigner was represented in this *café*. So surely as an amiable democrat, who had been forced to leave his country for his country's good, visited our hospitable shores, so surely did some irresistible attraction draw him to Zampa's. It is true that Nicolo was in some measure the cause of this, for he seemed to spend the greater

portion of his existence in the vicinity of Tower Wharf, marking down any bearded individual, and thrusting into his hand a greasy card; but, on the other hand, Zampa's establishment was sufficiently notorious on the continent, as the focus of intrigues and the refuge for destitute republicans.

At a hurried glance the guests assembled at Zampa's did not appear dangerous for the tranquillity of Europe; they were mostly awfully seedy in their attire, and their faces defied recognition by a dense layer of dirt; but they were in reality the more dangerous because of their apparent obscurity. In London that propaganda was instituted which bore such lamentable fruits in 1848, and the mass of pamphlets which swarmed from our presses proved that the republican party had money at its command, and was prepared to spend it recklessly for the furtherance of the cause. And, although these men appeared so poverty-stricken, and John Bull would have laughed heartily at the notion of their endangering the public welfare, had that worthy gentleman been able to pierce the outer covering, he would have been horrified at the discovery he made thereby. That "the hood does not make the monk" is as true now as in those ages when the Roman church gave laws to nations, and the self-sacrificing sons of Loyola were among the most constant visitors to Zampa's, whence they watched the progress of the republican press, and laughed in their sleeve at the delusions which were thus propagated. Absolutism and democracy have much in common, more, perhaps, than the greatest Russophobe may imagine, for both strive to attain the same end, the subjugation of the world to self.

The chamber of honour at Nicolo's had been recently engaged by a German, M. Herman Kurz, who had ostensibly arrived in England to represent the interests of the eminent firm of Salzwedel and Co., manufacturers of stearine candles. He was quiet and reserved in his manners, holding but slight intercourse with the guests, and was regarded as a credit to the establishment. In his lighter hours he liberally paid for large quantities of *afnaf*, which the republicans only too gladly drank, and, in return, was allowed to pursue the even tenor of his way without let or hindrance.

I am afraid, however, that M. Kurz was sadly negligent of the interests of his house, for he spent the greater portion of his time in wandering about the streets of London, and paid repeated visits to the Bank, whose exterior he examined with a very curious, though evidently practised glance.

What the objects of his speculations might be I cannot say, but the result was evidently satisfactory, and he then mounted a Putney 'bus, walked across the bridge, and marched for two hours about Wimbledon common, apparently lost in admiration of the furze bushes as representatives of English vegetation.

Such had been his mode of life for nearly a week; but one afternoon it seemed that the furze was going to be neglected on behalf of a stranger who was coming across the common in the other direction. The two gentlemen met, and entered into casual conversation about the weather, and abuse of England, which is the never-failing topic for foreigners. At length M. Kurz remarked,—

"I have picked up here a strange token of silver. It seems to have been broken, and I cannot exactly make out what it is intended to represent."

It was certainly a curious object, for it represented two F's placed back to back, and would have puzzled the most acute archæologist to decipher. The stranger, however, appeared to understand it thoroughly, for he remarked,—

"I think this piece," producing it from his pocket, "is wanting."

And, placing them together, they formed a cross of four F's, the mystic sign of the German Turn Vereine, and reading "Frisch, frömm, frey, froh!" M. Kurz appeared perfectly satisfied with this, and then added in German the simple phrase, "When the swallows homeward fly." The stranger replied, "*Vendetta*;" and they were immediately the best of friends.

"You, I presume," said M. Kurz, "are the agent of the affiliated societies, Lestignac."

The stranger bowed, and added, "And you the accredited agent of the secret committee of the German Turn Verein Union. I presume you have a letter for me."

"No, I could not afford to run any risk in the present critical state of affairs. Secrecy is essential to our success; but you are aware that I am initiated in all the secrets of the great society. As, too, the movement will depend entirely on your communication to me, I need not add that I am anxious to hear your report, and get home again, where my presence is anxiously expected."

"My news," said the Frenchman, "is easily given. The government has played into our hands, and the faubourgs are ripe for revolt; but France is not prepared for any revolution which only produces a dynastic change. So long

as a king remains on the throne we have no occasion to send Louis flying—he answers our purpose fully. France has already experienced the results of precipitation, and we are not prepared to take up arms unless the permanence of the social republic is secured. To do that, however, an impulse from without is wanted, and we look to the Germans to produce that convulsion which will prevent foreign despots from banding together and ruining our hopes as they have done before."

"And Germany," the other replied, "is fully prepared for revolution, and to accept the consequences; but we are not strong enough to cope with our tyrants single-handed. So soon as 30,000 brave sans-culottes are assembled on the frontier of the Rhine, the Schwarz, Roth, Gold, will be unfurled—but not before."

"Then I am afraid, M. Kurz, that matters will have to remain *in statu quo*. Although we should be only too glad to punish the Prussians for old indignities, you must be well aware that France is not disposed to make fresh sacrifices for Germans, who have always behaved to her with ingratitude. As the price of our interference we demand that the Germans should throw away the scabbard. The kings who now prey on the vitals of the nation must receive a warning example; then, but not till then, France will cross the frontier."

"What you ask is impossible. It is true that in southern Germany great progress has been made. The soldiers have been taught that they are our brothers, and they will indubitably be ready to join us when the first blow has been struck; but we are not in a position to take the initiative. The Turn Vereine, of which I have the honour to be the representative, although 150,000 strong, are sadly divided among themselves, and the majority, while desirous of a change, are not prepared to overthrow the monarchical institutions which have existed among us so long. The extreme party is ready to follow the example of France blindly, and I have no doubt that, when the first step has been taken, the others will be induced to follow with ease; but we require support from without, or we shall be crushed in turn, without power to resist."

"As I said before, a dynastic change is not what we desire. The overthrow of the Bourbons would then only serve to bring back the Bonapartes, and they are no friends of popular institutions. The revolution we are preparing must be fundamental, and, consequently, must be supported

by the rest of Europe. In the hope that the young blood of Germany is ready to follow us in the logical consequences of such a convulsion, I have been chosen to confer with you. If the result of our interview does not guarantee fraternisation we shall not move further in the matter at present."

"In the event, then, of southern Germany establishing a republic in conjunction with France, may we be prepared to expect the armed intervention of France against the tyrants?"

"That is entirely a question for after consideration; and, besides, no assistance would probably be promised, unless France were guaranteed her old frontier. The Cis-Rhenane Prussian provinces are ready to join in the movement at once, and long for the moment when they may revert to France. Prussia will be unable to protect them if the anticipated events occur at home, and it is highly probable that we should be willing to extend our protection even beyond the Rhine, for the sake of securing those provinces."

"Then southern Germany will be ready to go with you, and we must trust that the force of example will act beneficially on Prussia. With Austria, I believe, we shall have no difficulty."

"Austria will have quite enough to engage her attention at home. The reports we have received from Italy and Hungary insure us success in that quarter. The clever scheme by which Metternich thought to check the nationalities by dislocating the troops, and keeping down Hungary by means of Italians, and Italy by Bohemians, has been of extraordinary advantage to us. The Italians have been so admirably worked upon that they will not fire a shot in defence of tyranny, and, if our arrangements in Lombardy turn out as we have every reason to anticipate, the Emperor of Austria will be besieged in his palace by his own troops."

"In behalf of the Turn Vereine, then, I can promise that the experiment shall be tried in south Germany, but I warn you that its result will entirely depend on the amount of co-operation afforded us by France. The King of Würtemberg and the Grand Duke of Baden will be only too glad to purchase safety by timely concessions, and it must depend on our agents to prevent the people at large being satisfied with a mere measure of reform. All is in readiness for the movement, and the leaders of the popular party are playing our game unconsciously. They have set the ball rolling, and when they attempt to stop it they will find that they must

give way, and follow the impulse. But, if French troops once appear in the land, the flame will be kindled and rapidly spread. The Prussian king will not then step forward as the champion of autocracy, and, indeed, he will have enough to do at home."

"Ah bah! you seem to me frightened of those Prussians. They are worse than useless—they are idiots enough to believe in the efficacy of religion, and fancy the prosperity of the nation is inextricably linked with the completion of the Cologne cathedral. Their pietist king is clever enough to pamper the feeling, and he has succeeded in isolating Prussia from the rest of Germany. The Rhenish provinces once lost, and the cathedral with them, the people will believe that the glory has departed from Israel, and will in vain summon the rest of Germany to a holy war. The time has passed for such nonsense."

"You take, I am afraid, too sanguine a view of Germany. It is true that the Germans regard the Prussians with dislike, but that dislike is mingled with a great amount of dread, such as boys feel for their schoolmaster. Prussia has so long taken the intellectual lead, and the tranquillity produced by her institutions has led to such a forced belief in her vitality, that any independent movement in Germany must have the support of the Prussian nation to insure its permanent success."

"And that support we are promised. So soon as the tocsin of revolution sounds in the streets of Paris, the knell of monarchy will peal in Berlin. We have the surest promises of support, and are inclined to put trust in them. The movement cannot fail, believe me; our measures are so carefully arranged through the whole breadth of Europe that we must succeed. But we wish, for our own security, that the revolution should not appear to emanate from France alone; and, if south Germany will rise simultaneously with us, and thus prove that the old national hatred has been extirpated, to give place to the pure principles of fraternity, the game will be won, and we, M. Kurz, shall obtain the long-looked-for reward of our exertions."

"I will immediately proceed to Hanau, and lay the result of our interview before the committee, which, I feel sure, will cordially respond. But tell me, how stands it in this country—shall we have the support of our brethren here?"

"What can be expected from the stolid Britons? They are revelling in the result of their free-trade doctrines; and, though we have many friends scattered over the country,

they are almost powerless against that feeling which induces the people to look for relief in moral resistance. They will never take the lead in any movement to subvert monarchy ; but we must humour them—their money is useful to us. We will go presently and see that M. Simmonds, the corresponding member and representative of the English Chartists, but not a word to him of our arrangements. He is so full of excitement and of his own importance, that he would spread the news abroad and ruin our scheme."

" I think, for my part, that the English nation are prepared for revolution. They have been so long held down by the aristocracy that they are not yet conscious of their strength ; but this free - trade conquest has partially enlightened them. They have slipped the bit, and are reveling in their fancied freedom. Before long the pressure will recommence, and the government will try to keep them in hand ; but a nation which has once enjoyed the fruits of liberty, as conquered by itself, will not easily return to its pristine condition. The English have taken up arms before now in defence of trifles, and I feel that the great example we shall furnish them will not fail of its effect."

" My dear M. Kurz," said the Frenchman dryly, " I am afraid that, for a revolutionist, you are too much imbued with the German passion for theorising. You forget that England has a safety-valve always ready in emigration, and the rulers will never allow matters to come to a crisis. As a student of history you should remember how England was kept down at a much more perilous crisis than this. When the people groaned under the intolerable pressure of war taxation, and ventured to murmur, the *Habeas Corpus* Act was suspended, and the leaders were shipped without noise to the plantations. At the present day government behaves differently ; opportunities for voluntary emigration are allowed, and all the hot heads who find they have not sufficient room for expansion at home carry their theories across the Atlantic. Besides, the leaders of the revolutionary party in England hold no social rank ; their fiery attacks on the existing state of things fall on barren soil, and are mostly confined to the *ateliers*. No ; England will never follow the glorious example we are willing to give. But I allow that no harm would result from a popular insurrection ; the houses of the nobility and the public buildings would form an admirable field for a skilful leader, and with this view I have recently been examining them closely. Their Bank invites plunder ;

it is guarded by two policemen! What a magnificent prospect, and yet how shamefully neglected!"

The two men were silent for awhile, evidently lost in profound thought at the plunder which an attack on the Bank of England would produce; and they deeply regretted, I have no doubt, that they could not land an army of their adherents to carry out this laudable object. Then M. Kurz proceeded:—

"It is indeed lamentable that Englishmen should be so blinded to their interests. What a superb operation might be effected in a city which contains such a surplus population belonging to the dangerous classes! But should we not enlighten this Mr. Simmonds, and induce him to get up an insurrection, by means of which such immense funds could be placed at the service of the fraternal democracy?"

"Hush! not a word must be breathed on such a subject, or good-bye to our subsidies. You do not understand the English yet, M. Kurz. These leaders of the people are so bigoted as to act from purely patriotic motives. The workmen may be starving, yet they will contribute their mite to the support of the great cause; but they would sooner die than raise a hand to plunder. I am certain that, if a revolution were to be successfully carried through in England to-morrow, the first step of the provisional government would be to hang any plunderer. Such would be their way of rewarding patriotism! After that I need not tell you that any allusion to the wealth which might be obtained from a timely movement would render Mr. Simmonds a dangerous enemy, instead of the very useful friend he now is."

"Inexplicable people, the English!" M. Kurz sighed, most sincerely I believe. "When will the light of pure reason dawn for the nation?"

"Never, I am afraid," said M. Lestignac in reply; "but that does not prevent us milking the cow. We must humour the leaders, and let them believe that the impending European revolution is impelled by the purest motives, and then we can make sure of monetary support from them. Large sums will be requisite, and I am sorry to say that Father Giudacci has brought us very unsatisfactory promises from Rome, instead of the moneys he ought to have paid in. Our treasury is nearly exhausted, and it must be filled again before any revolution can succeed in Paris."

"And we are much in the same plight, for the committee

voted a considerable sum for the purchase of arms and manufacture of pikes, and secrecy is one of the most expensive items put up for sale. We cannot hold out much longer, and I fear that the crisis must be precipitated, or else our committee will be dissolved. Hence I am disposed to believe that they will coalesce in the views put forward by you in behalf of the fraternal societies of France."

"A glorious future is, then, in store for us, and the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity will reign triumphant in Europe. *En avant, marchons!* so now to Mr. Simmonds. You will find him at No. 22, Turnagain Lane, in Camden Town. At five o'clock we will meet there, and hear what England is prepared to do in the coming glorious era."

And with this agreement they parted, and returned the same roads by which they had met.

And such, my countrymen, is one of the results of those blessed national institutions of which we justly feel so proud. The liberty of the subject, pushed to its excess, has rendered us morally responsible for the blood shed so wantonly in Europe. The Home Office had received full information from the embassies that these dangerous firebrands had landed on our shores; and, although the precautions the emissaries took rendered certainty impossible, they were justly suspected of being the agents of the democratic party. But of course it was no concern of ours; they offended none of our laws, and, had they been arrested, and the motive for their landing inquired into, some member would have risen in the house, and caused a hubbub which the government was not inclined to resist. So, perhaps, it acted for the best; and while assuring the embassies that every step should be taken to prevent any overt act of treason, the spies were left at full liberty to find out for themselves what particular cause induced these gentlemen to visit our shores, and report home the result of their espionage.

But M. Herman Kurz and M. Lestignac were not novices in the pleasant art of revolution, and they quietly proceeded on their various routes, as if perfectly unconscious of the watchful eyes fixed upon them, or the insidious attempts strangers made to invite their confidence.

CHAPTER XV.

WIND-BAGS.

“AND a very satisfactory result I think that is, Jenny—a season over, and only two holes, nothing to speak of, which half a yard of oiled silk will make right, £146 left for the winter, and, above all, the interests of society promoted by Professor Mudfog’s valuable researches into the state of the atmosphere. Come, old girl, we haven’t done amiss; and there’ll be something left for the fraternal democrats too.”

“Bother your Fraternals, I say!” replied the lady thus apostrophised. “I can’t think what good you’ll get by your fraternising—a parcel of guzzling rascals who are too lazy to work, and always borrowing from such foolish fellows as you.”

“Why, Jenny, haven’t I told you scores and scores of times that, when the great social republic is established, I have a promise from Mr. Wetherspoon, the president that is to be, that I shall be aëronaut-in-chief to the government? No more *Convolvulus* gardens then, old girl! I shall be a regularly paid professor, and then won’t I serve out that old vagabond of a Bumpus for cutting me down two pounds an ascent.”

“I tell you what it is, Mr. Simmonds,” the lady angrily went on, “mind you don’t get yourself into trouble with the police. The gentleman on our beat told Mary the other night as good as that he’d got orders to watch who came in and out, and that you were a dangerous character. He wanted her to let him into the kitchen, that he might hear what you were all talking about; but she soon sent him off with a flea in his ear. I fancy it was the cold beef he’d have liked to pay his attention to, and not to your foreign songs.”

“Such, my dear Jenny, is one of the consequences peculiar on being a public character. My letters signed ‘Brutus’ are beginning to excite a sensation; a cowardly government is growing alarmed, and is trying to terrify me, although conscious that it cannot stem the current of progress. But I am prepared to die a martyr to the great

cause. Let them come on—Job Simmonds will be the same on the scaffold as he has hitherto proved. Jane, send for some beer—I am thirsty."

And Mr. Simmonds (I beg his pardon, Professor Simmonds) folded his arms in a magniloquent manner, and prepared to wage wordy warfare with an army of truculent policemen. But the bloodthirsty mood was not proof against the look or comic surprise which his wife assumed, and he, too, soon broke out into a hearty laugh, which was rendered still heartier by the arrival of the beer.

This conversation had been carried on in a large loft, which was crowded with various articles appertaining to the aéronautic professor. Suspended from a beam was the state car, now stripped of its gay trappings, and leaving exposed the wickerwork substratum. In one corner lay the balloon itself, emitting a far from savoury smell of India-rubber varnish, while the valve was laid on a shelf above it. All round the room were curious instruments, and ropes festooned on the walls, while several models of aérostatic machines in various stages of progression showed that the professor held his trade in high esteem.

The professor was, indeed, an enthusiast, and, as a necessary consequence, had spent every available shilling in inventing schemes to steer balloons. Theoretically they were admirable, and when the little models—aided by a pair of gigantic bellows raised on a stand, and employed to inflate the balloon for reparatory purposes—sailed across the loft, the professor felt that his success was certain. Unfortunately, when tried on a larger scale the experiment always failed; but the professor was not discouraged. He would set to work again with unfailing energy, and try to solve the riddle. It is needless to add that the only certainty he ever acquired was that his money went, and he had nothing to show for it.

Personally the professor was a quaint-looking little man, with a huge reddish-grey moustache and beard, and legs and arms by no means to match. I believe every bone in his body, including his collar-bone, had been fractured by various experiments with parachutes, which had been for a time his mania; but this had not in any way diminished his courage. He was quite ready, at any given moment, to descend in a parachute, and police prohibition against such dangerous schemes had been his first great grievance against government. The next one was more legitimate. He had suggested to the Admiralty a method by which balloons could be employed in the Arctic regions, and which would have

proved very useful; at any rate he ought to have been treated courteously, considering that he asked nothing ~~for~~, himself, but had even spent a considerable sum in experimentalising. But the First Lord had not taken the slightest notice of his petition, and for a whole summer he had brooded over his wrongs, and only wished he had the First Lord up in the car with him.

During the winter the professor was necessarily idle, and Satan soon took advantage of his want of occupation to throw him into contact with a party of disappointed men who were plotting how to overthrow the government, and build on its ruins a social republic. Had their means been equal to their ability they might have proved dangerous; but fortunately they could only plot treason, and had no chance of carrying it out. The professor was a perfect godsend to them, for he was, comparatively with themselves, a millionaire; and amazing were the pots of beer they drank at his expense on the occasion of his initiation. Being a very generous man his purse was open to all the brothers, and they rewarded him by electing him corresponding member of their club, for, among other accomplishments, he spoke French fluently.

Now, I do not fancy that the professor ever gave a thought to what would happen in the event of their plotting proving successful; he merely joined in under a vague notion that he could annoy the First Lord in some way; but as for deposing the Queen, I am sure he never took such a step into calculation. The president of the republic, of whom he talked so glibly, represented to his ideas a successor of Lord John, a people's friend, who would go in for the charter, and never rob a poor man of his beer. No wonder, then, that M. Lestignac spoke so contemptuously of the little professor.

After the refreshing draught of beer the professor proceeded to mend the balloon, and make all snug for the winter. He then carefully inspected his models, and swore once or twice very harmlessly at the First Lord when he came to the one which had caused him such ire. From the loft he proceeded to the yard, where he was greeted by a tremendous outburst of barking, for the professor was an intense friend of the canine species, and any stray or masterless dog was sure of present shelter from him. He had, indeed, been pulled up once or twice for dog-stealing, and great was his wrath that he had been convicted by a magistrate and sentenced to a £5 fine because he wore a

white hat, and the blear-eyed Solon considered that none but blackguards wore that species of head-covering. But, take him altogether, the professor was as harmless a little man as you could find in London, and, even if he did preach subversive doctrines, he had no idea what they would prove in their development. With him republicanism was a safety-valve for his hot humours—a plaything, like a model, on which to theorise; and I am certain, had matters come to extremities, and Her Majesty's throne been endangered, he would have been one of the first to rally round it, and punch the head of any French fraterniser who dared to lay unholy hands upon the institutions of this country.

The dangerous men who had linked him in their schemes were fully aware of the good heart which prompted the little man, and therefore very cautiously avoided letting him know any more of their secrets than was convenient. His vanity was pleased by the title of "corresponding member," and, although I do not believe his letters altogether contained a line of treason, he felt intensely proud of his exalted position, and would no doubt have gladly become a martyr, if the government had been so foolish as to interfere with his harmless insanity.

It was quite true that the professor's house was watched, but not, as he expected, on his own account. The authorities had their eye upon him, but Mr. Bumpus had responded for his loyalty, and he was left alone. But it was advisable to detect the men who employed him as a catspaw, and who, at the same time, were spreading discontent among the London workmen; and I have no doubt that, in good time, they were introduced to Captain Chesterton, and had to climb that ladder which has no topmost rung. But with them I have no acquaintance. My history is too aristocratic to condescend to bilious shoemakers and tailors, and I only mention them here because I wish to enlist the sympathies of my readers in behalf of the little professor, who was decidedly "more sinned against than sinning."

Such being his present temper, I need not say how proud the professor felt at the visit of M. Lestignac, the agent of the French Fraternal Democrats, so soon followed by his coadjutor, Herman Kurz. The cleanest of pipes and the creamiest of half-and-half were produced for their special delectation, and the conversation soon took a very interesting turn, Mrs. Simmonds the while scarcely caring to veil her contempt and detestation of those "ojous" foreigners. The professor, however, loftily waved her from

the room, as the interview was not intended for feminine ears, which the lady obeyed, giving him, however, strong hints not to make such a fool of himself as usual.

"Well, gentlemen, and how long before we shall hail the cry of *Vive la République!*?" said the professor eagerly, and hitting out wildly at an *imago* of the First Lord he had conjured up.

"Hush, my dear Simmonds," the Frenchman checked him; "such words as those must not be uttered rashly. There are spies abroad: I saw one of the myrmidons of government close to your door."

"Let them hear it: what care I? Job Simmonds insists on being a martyr for the holy cause;" and he took a sanguinary revenge on the pot of half-and-half, the foreigners regarding the disappearance of the fluid with vacant looks of regret.

"You are, as usual, impetuous to the extreme, *mon cher*; but, if you are prepared for martyrdom, we have a holy work yet to carry out. Our suffering brethren are anxiously waiting our return. I trust that I shall be enabled to carry back some compensation with me. How stand the subscriptions?"

"Ahem, ahem!" coughed the professor, as a warning to his wife, who was evidently listening, to desist; "I am sorry to say they are not satisfactory; trade is slack, and the brothers are unable to assist in the cause to the extent they might wish; in point of fact, they only amount to 15s. 9d.—"

"Oh, perfidious Albion!" the Frenchman despairingly groaned.

"— But I am willing to contribute my mite," the professor added, "and shall be happy to give you £20—"

"Job!" said a shrill voice at the door; but the professor took no notice.

"Generous mortal!" the Frenchman ejaculated; "the president of the universal republic shall be made aware of this. Your money is put out to good interest. When the great day dawns for Europe the name of Job Simmonds shall be inscribed in letters of gold at the head of the benefactors to society."

The professor proceeded to his bureau to fetch the required sum; but Mrs. Simmonds's patience was now exhausted, and she rushed into the room, fully determined to prevent an outlay which represented any quantity of new dresses and bonnets.

"Oh, Job!" she said bitterly, "you're a bigger fool

than ever. You're going to give your money to this foreigner, and forget how many poor creatures are starving at home. Besides, I want a new dress and bonnet, and you told me this morning you couldn't afford it, and now you're going to give away £20 to this swindler. Don't tell me! I'm sure he's a swindler with his fraternity! Didn't that Pole who stole your great coat out of the passage talk about the great brotherhood of nations and his estates, and you gave him a sovereign and he took the coat? Pah, I haven't patience with you, that I haven't!"

"Gentlemen," Job replied, turning to his visitors, "you will pardon her, I am sure. Women's minds are not constituted so that they shall understand the blessings of pure democracy. Mrs. Simmonds," he then added, turning to his still irate wife, "I can pardon your ignorance; but I cannot forgive your interference. I shall feel obliged by your retiring from the apartment, and attending exclusively to your domestic duties by sending for some more beer."

Mrs. Simmonds was going to commence a fresh expostulation; but the sight of the money being handed to the "brother" overpowered her, and she quitted the room with a most furious bang of the door.

"Yes, gentlemen," Job then proceeded, "I am only too glad that I have it in my power to evince my adherence to the great principles to which we all do homage. But I have a sublime idea to make known to you; it occurred to me this morning when in bed. I have hit on a scheme by which Louis Philippe can be dislodged without a blow being struck."

"Indeed! And would you impart it to us, that I may lay it before the committee?" M. Lestignac remarked eagerly.

"Most willingly. I propose that my balloon shall ascend from Paris laden with bombshells. As soon as I get over the Tuileries I will render it stationary by a mechanism which I am now perfecting, and I will launch the projectiles in turn with such precision that the entire palace shall be destroyed in five minutes. What say you, gentlemen?"

[And this is another of those anomalies of which my history is so full. Job Simmonds, who would not hurt a fly wittingly, and was notorious for his kind heart, talked as coolly about destroying the French royal family as a butcher would of cutting a sheep's throat. How it is I cannot explain, but such is human nature.]

Both gentlemen expressed their delight at the scheme, and called it admirable, but agreed that it would be a pity

to destroy so magnificent a palace merely to get rid of a worthless old king ; so Job was obliged to be contented with the empty praise, and a promise that he should be aéronautic professor to the president of the French republic when his scheme might have a chance of being employed against some of the enemies of the country.

For an hour or two the foreigners discussed social politics with the professor, and so delighted did he feel that I am happy to say they departed before he had an opportunity to make further monetary sacrifices for the good cause, as he had intended to do.

Poor Job ! he was but a child in the hands of these practised men of the world, who fooled him to the top of his bent, and would have sold him without hesitation to save their own worthless necks. The amiable theorist could not or would not see the logical consequences of his dogmas, and though his wife justly upbraided him, after the departure of the foreigners, for his extreme gullibility, the professor was by this time far removed above all mundane considerations, and was soon dreaming that he was paying a visit to the Emperor of the Moon, who appointed him director-in-chief of the aérostatic railway between London and Laputa.

The two foreign gentlemen parted soon after leaving the professor's hospitable mansion. How they spent the rest of the evening I really cannot say, but it was at any rate a curious coincidence that two letters in different ciphers went off by that night's mail addressed to the Russian ambassador at Frankfort, and stating that the revolution would break out at any moment that his Imperial Majesty judged most advisable.

Perhaps, too, this may account for the fact that both gentlemen the next morning changed a large quantity of ruble notes in the vicinity of the Exchange, and I very much doubt whether the proceeds went to fill the existing gap in the republican treasury.

M. Lestignac, on crossing to France, was arrested in Boulogne ; but the police were compelled to let him go, as there was not a scintilla of evidence against him ; while M. Kurz, after making a needlessly long stay in Hamburg, and having mysterious conferences with several individuals, also returned home to lay the result of his interview before the Central Committee.

CHAPTER XVI.

FILIA DOLOROSA.

THE defection of the Marquis was not the only blow from which Madame Leblanc was destined to suffer, for she had scarcely returned to Paris ere her very existence seemed to be compromised by a change in the views of the French government. There was a menacing cloud brooding over Paris; mobs of discontented artisans assembled in the faubourgs, and the aspect they assumed was so stern that Louis Philippe thought it advisable not to employ his favourite remedy of the fire-engine. It was evident that the movement was directed from higher quarters than the committee rooms of the democrats, for *brochures* and placards were continually flying about, while the hitherto invincible chief of the secret police was unable to detect the officina whence they emanated.

Under these awkward circumstances the government determined to vent its spite on the salons. It was presumed that these social reunions were converted into an arena for intrigue, and the police would not recognise the fact that gamblers are so absorbed by their master passion, that they have no superabundant energy to employ in plotting against kings. However, the fiat went forth, and at one fell swoop all those houses where playmen had spent their evenings profitably and harmlessly were closed until further orders. For awhile Madame Leblanc tried to make head against the storm, and would have kept open in defiance of the authorities, but her old friend, the police agent, strongly advised submission, and urged that it would be only a temporary measure. Madame Leblanc, fretting inwardly, was forced to yield, and made up for her disappointment by instituting a system of ingenious torture against Helen's peace of mind.

Madame Leblanc was naturally superstitious, and had more faith in omens than in religion; and when it occurred to her that her ill fortune dated from Helen's arrival she began to detest her, as the cause of all her downfall. Hence she gloated over the traces of carking care visible on poor Helen's face; and though a word from her would have been

sufficient to restore the sunshine, that word she determined not to utter ; so poor Helen wandered about, the ghost of her former self, earnestly praying that her mother's temper might change, and for strength from above to enable her to endure all her trials. But all the devoted love Helen displayed was insufficient to alter Madame Leblanc's conduct, and bitterly my heroine regretted that she had ever been summoned to her mother's side. At times she more than half resolved to benefit by Mr. Worthington's gift, and fly from her trials ; but she felt that it would be ungrateful on her part to leave her mother when adversity had fallen upon her, and her native pride would not permit the thought for a moment that change of circumstances might be presumed to have caused a change in her affection.

But the closing of the salons did not prove a temporary measure ; on the contrary, the police instituted a very strict surveillance, and it became almost impossible to infringe their regulations. At last Madame Leblanc was obliged to give way ; she quitted her luxurious apartment, and removed to a small third floor in the Rue St. Honoré, the only servant she retained being Julie. She spent her time alternately in abusing the police and in strict attention to the offices of her religion, both of which, I regret to say, only served to exacerbate her temper.

This more immediate contact with her mother only increased the poor girl's sufferings. Hitherto she had been comparatively a stranger to that amiable lady, and had only seen her in her best clothes and best behaviour ; but now she had only too many opportunities of gauging the rottenness of her heart, and the corruption which pervaded her every thought. Self was the watchword ; and though externally liberal so long as money was at her command, now that the pressure came upon herself there was a great change in the conduct of the household. Madame Leblanc never thought proper to deny herself any luxury in or out of season : money was always forthcoming to satisfy her most exorbitant wants ; but Helen was made the sufferer in many ways. Not that she cared *per se* for the loss of luxury ; how she lived was a matter of perfect indifference to her ; but as a touchstone of her mother's affection the change was very painful. Helen began to see that her mother's affection for her depended on external relations, and this is one of the most painful discoveries which a loving heart can make.

But worse remained behind. In proportion as their

status in society lowered, so did the company who visited them, and Helen was at times horrified by the allusions made in her presence. The women in whose conversation her mother took such delight, and who seemed to wake her up from the lethargy into which she had fallen, Helen felt intuitively were not the persons with whom a pure-minded girl should associate; but when she ventured to appeal to her mother that lady merely laughed, and told her that such straitlaced notions were only suited for brumous England.

The only person connected with their past splendour that still visited them was Mr. Smoothley, who had been many a time a victim to Madame's knack of turning the king. He did not play now; but in Helen's view he did worse, for he pestered her with his attentions, and something told her that his motives were not honourable toward her. It was a nothing, probably the result of Helen's excess of caution in her present society, which warned her against him—for he did not utter a word to offend her pride or her innocence; but she shrank from him instinctively, and was only too happy to escape from the impure air of home, and seek shelter and room for meditation in the Bois de Boulogne. Here she had chosen a secluded spot, where she nursed her woes, and thought much more than was good for her about her Charles.

In spite of her earnest resolves to regard him only as brother, Helen could not eradicate that strong feeling of love which her conscience told her was not such as should subsist between brother and sister. But my readers must not blame her for this; some dark hints dropped by the mysterious Julie had raised a flutter of hope in her wearied heart, and she dared nurse the delicious hope that her mother's fearful secret was untrue. Oh, what blessed manna the idea was to my dear Helen! Can anything more pitiable be conceived than a poor girl, who is imbued with the purest feelings, striving against the criminal love which had grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength? She had made up her mind to die—better so than lead a life of agony and remorse; and now that Julie had whispered to her doubts of her mother's story, how glorious life seemed to her! What did she care about the wretchedness of her home, so long as this blessed idea blossomed in her heart, and brought forth a plentiful crop of promised happiness and bright resolves?

One morning while Helen was seated at the accustomed spot, and meditating over her future course of life, if events

compelled her to quit the shelter of her mother's roof, she was accosted by a stranger, whom she had noticed anxiously gazing on her for the last few mornings, and who now seated himself by her side. There was nothing, however, in his appearance to inspire distrust; his face breathed gentleness and benevolence, and Helen felt an irresistible impulse to talk to him, and gain from him that confidence in life which he seemed so well adapted to impart. He was a very old man, feebly tottering on a gold-headed stick; but there was nothing repulsive about his senility. On the contrary, he bore the evident traces of having passed a happy and contented life in the exercise of that religion of which his velvet skull-cap indicated him a minister.

Now, Helen had very strange notions about her. She did not think, because she was a firm Protestant, that all members of the sister church were booked for a very naughty place. In point of fact her education had been sadly neglected, and a due course of Exeter Hall lectures would have shown her the error of her heterodox tenets. As it was, she had an idea that, if a person held a firm belief in his own mode of worshipping the universal Creator, and lived a life in accordance with the views in which he had been brought up, he stood as good a chance of future happiness as the most faithful Protestant—a very lax code of morality, I am afraid; but I do not think it rendered my Helen less inclined to believe in the truth of revelation. Hence, when the old priest addressed her, she did not turn and go on the other side as if he would contaminate her, but paid due reverence to his grey hairs.

"Pardon an old man, Mademoiselle; but I have noticed that you appear unhappy and perturbed in spirit for a long time, and it is the glorious privilege of the servants of every religion to comfort and help the weak-hearted."

"Indeed, Monsieur, you are mistaken. I should be sufficiently happy were it not for a divided duty on which I cannot form a resolve."

"You are English and a Protestant, I presume, and hence may feel disinclined to confide in the minister of a different faith; but, believe me, I feel an interest in you, and would gladly employ my feeble powers to set you on the right road. We are taught that 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.' What, then, must be the condition of a mind which my judgment leads me to believe is struggling between duty and affection! Hah! you start! My surmise is, then, well founded."

"No, Monsieur, you are again mistaken; you merely touched a painful chord; but the weakness is past. I am afraid the malady is beyond the resources of your art, and even were I to solicit your aid, you would be obliged to respond in a manner contrary to my inclination."

The conversation then turned on popular topics, in which the priest displayed a wondrous amount of talent and discrimination, and it grew with Helen into a regular custom to meet the Abbé, and draw some consolation from the fund of benevolence which he had ever in readiness for her.

Strange to say, this old priest earnestly besought Helen to seek strength and comfort in her Bible; for, as he truly said, there were no evils, however terrible in their consequences they might appear, which could not be remedied from the sacred pages of the divine mission. I can see Mrs. Jones shaking her head incredulously, and muttering that all priests are wolves in sheep's clothing; but she is mistaken in this instance. If Mrs. Jones had enjoyed the opportunities which have fallen to my lot of conversing with priests who have lived through all the horrors of the revolution she would probably alter her opinion. A long life of seclusion had taught my old friend, the Abbé Condamine, that there were faults on both sides, and that a religion which could be so utterly subverted as was his faith in 1792 must necessarily be suffering from some inherent defect, which God, for His all-wise purposes, had thus punished. Not that he had doubted for a moment the vitality of his church; he was certain that it would rise again more powerful and universal than before, and that the trials it had undergone would purify it. Sad was his temper, therefore, when he found that the church to which he had sworn obedience had, like the Bourbons, learned nothing and forgotten nothing during the period of its dethronement, and that it desired secular aggrandisement, instead of imitating the sublime humility of its Great Founder. After a severe mental struggle he determined that he would no longer take an active part in the ecclesiastical polity. A small annuity he enjoyed secured him from want, and he spent his life in the practice of active benevolence. He had gradually established around him a small clientèle of protégés, and on their behalf would dauntlessly invade the abodes of the rich and the great. Whenever a good action was to be done no rebuff would intimidate him; and though constitutionally the most nervous of men, he would have willingly faced a

lion if by so doing he could insure the permanent welfare of some deserving widow.

But the most heterodox tenet he held was, that the cares of this world should be removed before any attempt was made to inculcate the precepts of religion. He never inquired whether the recipients of his bounty attended mass regularly, or to what creed they might belong ; but so soon as their temporal welfare was attended to, and they had time to think of God apart from their daily bread, he introduced the subject. But not in a rough or domineering manner, like too many of the younger priests—far from this ; he condescended to argue and teach the great truths of Christianity in a humble and penitent spirit. It is wonderful what a number of converts he made by this system ; and though the other priests were very indignant at his procedure, and tried hard to prevent the spread of such heterodoxical opinions, the life of the old priest was so blameless that no persuasion would induce the archbishop to interfere.

While Abbé Condamine was welcomed with blessings among the poor, he was regarded by the rich as a harmless madman ; but this did no injury to his collection. People gladly gave, some to get rid of him, others because they felt a degree of reverence for his age and sainted appearance ; and he possessed many staunch friends among the middle classes, who, good Catholics as they were, were still not indisposed to thwart secretly the overbearing doctrines of the curés. While visiting a family residing in the same house as Helen Mowbray he heard some vague rumours about the unhappy life she led, and a hint was sufficient to set his active benevolence at work. He determined on forming her acquaintance, and we have seen how chance favoured his designs.

But he could not induce Helen by any persuasion to confide to him what was preying on her mind. She felt that the unhappy terms on which she now lived with her mother ought not to become the topic of conversation even with a man whom she respected so much as the Abbé ; and hence she bore her bitter burden unrepiningly, and struggled against the feeling which urged her to leave her mother's house at once before worse happened to her. What awaited her she could not imagine ; but she was conscious that some plots were going on against her happiness, from the conferences her mother repeatedly held with Mr. Smoothley, and the hints Julie gave her that a friend was watching over her, and all would be well yet. At length Helen

was fated to learn the entire extent of her misfortune, and the full measure of her mother's love.

She was seated in the drawing-room, engaged on one of those Penelope-like labours, which young ladies affection, and which never terminate. Her mother was absent from the house, as was, indeed, very frequently the case now, for her religion seemed to call her repeatedly to church, as if she were striving to reconcile her conscience and her interest by extreme outward devotion. Suddenly Helen heard a footstep in the outer room, and the Count made his appearance. Helen was greatly startled by the fierce look of determination which had settled on his face, and still more by the words in which he addressed her.

"The sacrifice is nearly consummated," he said in a hoarse, concentrated whisper, "and you are about to become the victim of your mother's artifices. All is arranged with Mr. Smoothley, and this day he will pay over the stipulated sum for which he purchases you. Was I not right in warning you? No friend is here to take your part but myself. Will you longer remain deaf to my protestations of love? I tell you that I alone can save you, and that you must fly with me this night, or it will be too late."

Helen naturally thought that the Count was mad, and in her first impulse was about to spring up and ring the bell for assistance; but an iron grip held her, and the Count hissed,—

"Foolish girl, you will not believe me? Then read this note addressed to your mother by Mr. Smoothley. It contains evidence to prove more than I have asserted. Read, I say, and see what a fond mother you have."

Helen obeyed, and soon the sickening certainty overpowered her that her mother was ready to sacrifice her on the altar of selfishness. It stated that Mr. Smoothley would pay over this day the sum of £1500, and would be at liberty to carry out his designs on Helen. I need not enter into the details of this villainous conspiracy; it is sufficient to hint that every measure would be taken, and Helen have no chance of escape. But what should she do now? She must fly, and that at once; but whither? Anywhere, anywhere, even if out of the world, to escape so foul an indignity. So soon as the Count saw that she had mastered the contents of the letter he threw himself at her feet, and began another passionate avowal of his love, urging her to fly with him.

But not unnoticed ; Julie is standing at the half-closed door with a knife in her hand, and her eyes gleaming with fury. If Helen dared to consent to the Count's proposals she had sworn to kill her. The Count had promised to marry the waiting-maid, and, though she had apparently assented to his plans on Helen, she had never intended them to be carried out. But a glow of satisfaction crept over her face when she heard Helen say in a gentle voice,—

"I thank you, Monsieur le Comte, for your kind interest in my welfare ; but I cannot accept your proposal. Helen Mowbray will know how to defend herself, and has friends on whom she can rely in the hour of need."

The Count renewed his protestations, but, finding them in vain, quitted the room with an ominous scowl. No sooner was Helen alone than she penned the hurried note which caused such dire commotion at Gürkenhof, and slipped out to post it. She had not returned to the house a minute before Julie came to her, and urged her to fly at once if she wished to save herself from outrage. She must not stop in this dreadful house another night ; the safety of all depended on her immediate departure. Dizzied and helplessly struggling against contending emotions, Helen passively obeyed Julie's impetuous commands, and her preparations were speedily made for departure. But no persuasion would induce her to remove one article given her by her mother ; she would leave her roof as she had entered beneath it, and the clothes she had brought with her from beloved Birchmere, and which she had kept from some superstitious motive, must now be turned to good stead.

But where should she go—where find a shelter in this immense city, which did not contain a single friend in whom she could trust ? Yes, there was one—the Abbé. How could she have forgotten him ? He had told her repeatedly to come to him in any emergency, he would protect her against every enemy, and had given her an address to which she could apply. Mechanically she searched for it in her pocket-book : it was to "Mother Constantia, Directress of the Convent of the Bleeding Heart," and thither Helen determined to proceed at once, and await the coming of her beloved Charley.

A fiacre was hurriedly summoned, into which Helen entered after taking an affectionate farewell of Julie, who nad, after all, been a good friend to her. But Julie would not consent to hear where she was going ; she said she did not wish her conscience hampered with further sins, and

when milady asked where Miss Helen was she could safely answer she did not know. Helen could write to her "poste restante" in a fortnight, when the alarm at her disappearance had blown over, and till then she was to be a good girl, and hope for the best. Perhaps, Julie added, she might be able to give her some information soon which would gladden her little heart; but all in good time—she must wait and hope. Milady was not always so bad as she was just now, and she might possibly repent her conduct.

So Helen drove away from the house, feeling wretched at her disobedience, and yet strangely comforted by Julie's half-allusions, and was soon heartily welcomed by Holy Mother, who seemed to have been expecting her coming, and was not at all surprised when the young English girl sought refuge among the Catholic sisters.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THOU SHALT DO NO MURDER."

WHEN Madame Leblanc returned home and inquired for Helen, the ever-watchful Julie told her that her daughter had been induced by Mr. Smoothley to accompany him to the Theatre Royal, to see Rachel in one of her great representations. Madame Leblanc smiled bitterly at the thought that Helen was thus playing into her hands, and retired to her room at an early hour, saying that she felt unwell, and did not wish to be disturbed. If Miss Helen returned soon she might come to her; if not, her mother desired to see her early in the morning. Julie retired with a bow, and Madame was left to her own devices.

But not to sleep; she was restless, she knew not why; and a strange feeling of impending evil, she knew not whence, brooded over her. She began to reflect on the odious bargain she had made with Mr. Smoothley, and wished she could recall it. Her Helen was a good girl, better than she had ever been, and it would be too bad to ruin her thus for her own schemes. But could she not hit on some device by which the evil might be prevented? Suppose she and Helen left Paris secretly and carried off the money, which was now lying in the escritoire, Mr. Smoothley could say nothing about being duped, for he

dared not, for his own character's sake, avow the villainous bargain into which she had entered with him. Full of these thoughts she waited anxiously for Helen's return; but the hours passed by, and still no daughter came. It could not be that Mr. Smoothley had found a willing victim in Helen, and yet her absence was strange; she had never been so late from home before. Then that strange cynicism to which she did homage returned in full strength to Madame Leblanc. "Her mother's daughter," she muttered; "what else could I expect? The society into which I have lately forced her has borne its fruits. She will soon take her place in our ranks. Well, I shall be revenged on *him*. How furious he will be when he hears that his daughter has become like her mother—that daughter he would not recognise, but whom I will make known to him yet as having followed too faithfully in her mother's footsteps. He will weep tears of blood when he finds that she knows his secret, and will drag his proud name through the mire. Ha, ha! he thought to bribe me to silence, and that I would forbear mentioning his name to my daughter. 'Tis true I was a fool to put myself in his power by marrying Monsieur Leblanc. How he found it out I never could imagine; but it showed that he took greater interest in my proceedings than he would wish to be known. O that I were rich now, to hurl his money in his face, and torture him by showing him his daughter degraded as her mother was before her! Scoundrel that he was to me, and yet I loved that man once! What fools women can be made by a gentle voice and winning manners!"

These reminiscences worked Madame Leblanc up to a dangerous pitch, and I believe that for awhile she felt pleased that her daughter had yielded to the persuasions of Mr. Smoothley. But her thoughts took another turn so soon as she remembered the days of her own youth and innocence; of the happy hours she had spent as a girl; then of the first blissful dreams of love, and of her Charles, whom she had been so proud of. And what had she gained by a course of sin? Was she the better for it in any way? With fading health and diminished fortune she was now compelled to sell her own daughter for the satisfaction of her luxurious wants. And when the blood-money was spent what would become of her? Where should she find a shelter when her own daughter would spurn her as the cause of her ruin? The future was veiled in dark clouds; there was no prospect of salvation here or hereafter. If she

believed in anything it was in her religion, and that condemned her without appeal. Her eye fell on the crucifix and she knelt in bitter agony, and really felt penitent when it was too late. She knew that it was too late; the accursed money seemed to turn blood red, and cast a lurid light over the scene. She cowered down before the image of her outraged Redeemer, and shrieked in her terror.

After awhile the paroxysm went off, and Madame Leblanc began to think seriously. Her failing health warned her that she had no great length of life left, and if she intended to repent she must set about the task at once. At last she decided that she would retire into a convent, and by bitter chastisement endure personal punishment for her manifold sins. Material suffering seemed the only feasible plan to this strange paradox of woman, and she gloated over the idea of the flagellation she would patiently undergo, as a certain means of reconciliation with her offended God; and then when she had secured her own pardon she would seek for Helen, and withdraw her from her sinful courses. She must be converted, and do penance in a convent for the crimes which her mother had forced upon her, and they might both be forgiven. Mr. Smoothley's money should be put to a good purpose, and if it rescued two souls from purgatory it might be that a special dictate of Providence had urged her to take it.

Chastened and subdued in spirit, Madame Leblanc retired to her couch, and for the first time during many years wept glad tears. The future seemed to her secure; her salvation could be insured so easily that she soon sobbed herself to sleep, her last muttered prayer being, "God guard my poor Helen this night!" And I trust that the prayer proved acceptable, and that Madame Leblanc's penitence was recognised as sincere by the Omniscient Eye —for it was her passport to eternity.

While Madame was thus meditating and promising to herself a life of repentance, Julie was waiting impatiently and yet fearfully on the Place de la Concorde for the Count, who had promised to meet her there. She had to tell him of Helen's flight, and yet was afraid he might guess it was from her instigation. Nor were her fears unfounded; for, as soon as the Count heard her story, he hissed in her ear, "It is your doing, vixen!" and struck her violently in the face.

For a moment Julie clutched at the bosom of her dress, and seemed struggling with her passion. At length she

wiped the blood from her cheek, and coolly said, "That blow will cost you dear, Jacques!"

" Devil that you are!" he said, somewhat alarmed at her concentrated fury; " why did you drive me to this? You know that I love you, and yet you have thwarted me in a scheme which promised us a glorious future."

" And did you think I would suffer you to wed that English girl after all your promises to me? You ought to have known me by this time, and that I would admit no rival to your heart. But you lose very little. Why not take the money Madame received to-day, and fly with me at once to Corsica?"

" Ah, a good ideaw that! I was unprepared, it is true, for such hurried movements; but, perchance, 'tis all for the best. I will take the money at once, and we will fly together; but first I must summon my companion. Be here again in three hours' time, after fetching what you wish to carry with you; and stay, lend me your Corsican knife—I am going into dangerous company, and may want it in self-defence."

" But no violence, Jacques; promise me that. She has been a good mistress to me, take her altogether, and I will not have her come to harm."

" Fool! you do not think I wish to have a murder on my conscience? I will take the money without disturbance, and we will fly. So kiss me, Julie, I am sorry I struck you; but my passion overcame me."

Ah, Jacques, Jacques! you did not understand that cold, deadly glance which Julie turned upon you, or yet, ruffian as you are, you would have thought again before you left her alone there to nurse her bitter thoughts of revenge. But you are safe for the present. She believes that you are sorry for your conduct; but she has not forgiven you. Some night the remembrance of that blow will revert to her as you lie clasped in her arms, and then farewell, Jacques! However, Julie proceeded home to pack up any items she wished to take with her, and while so engaged we will follow the *soi-disant* Count, and see what he is about.

He dived through a number of tortuous streets, evincing a wonderful knowledge of all the patrols, and carefully avoiding them, until he found himself on the Marché des Innocents. He then walked rapidly toward a triangular lamp, bearing in large letters the name of PAUL NIQUET, and, after a cautious glance around to see that no prying

eyes were upon him, he glided into the passage leading up to the estaminet, and soon stood before the counter, requesting to be served with a glass of *casse poitrine*.

And verily it was a cut-throat place, fit for the discussion of deeds of blood ; it was filthy to the extreme, and contained two bars and a long bench fastened to the wall, on which chiffonniers and other Parisian night-birds were snatching at a fearful sleep between the rounds of the patrol. But the person the Count was in search of was not visible, and he therefore hurried up to the end of the room—if a passage covered with glass may be thus called—and entered the little *sanctum* behind the bar, reserved for the more honourable members of the thieving profession, and those gentlemen whose drinking powers had caused them to be regarded with respect and treated with reverence.

The Count forced his way through the serried mass of guests who were lying about—some asleep, but the majority overpowered by the poison they had been imbibing in the shape of spirits. Even the Count, who was not particularly refined, was almost choked with the stifling atmosphere that pervaded the apartment, and was not sorry when he had found his looked-for companion, and beckoned him out into the corridor.

“*Meurt de Soif*,” he then whispered, “the time has come ; the job I told you of is to be done to-night. There are five hundred francs for you if we succeed.”

The stranger gave a lazy yawn, and merely said, “That’s too little for cutting a throat. Make it a thousand, and I’m your man.”

“Nonsense, man ! I told you before I take all the risk on myself ; you have only to wait at the outer door, and knock down anybody who tries to come in. Pah ! what are you afraid of ? It’s only an old woman.”

“O no ! I’m not afraid of anything ; but it’s not worth while putting one’s self out of the way for so little. Besides, I’m in funds to-day ; I eased an ass of an Englishman of a pocket-book containing two thousand francs, so I’ll go back and enjoy my sleep out. Good night !”

“Well, then,” the Count said with a groan, “I suppose I must agree to your terms, although they are very high. We can get in all right ; the porter has let me in before now so often at night that he won’t feel any surprise. Do you slip in before me as soon as the string is pulled, and go straight up to the second floor, where I shall soon join you.”

With a few more whispered sentences the two assassins

walked away, and by a circuitous route soon reached their destination. Everything turned out exactly as the Count had anticipated, and with his passe-partout he let himself in. Meurt de Soif was left in the anteroom cooling his heels, while his accomplice stealthily entered the sleeping apartment.

* * * * *

"Aha! it's becoming interesting," Meurt de Soif muttered to himself as he heard the hurried movements within the room. "My friend has not such an easy task as he had anticipated. Perhaps I had better go to his assistance."

But his laudable design was frustrated by the Count making his appearance again at that moment with dishevelled hair, and evidently bearing traces of a violent conflict.

"Ha!" he muttered savagely, "she will now see whether her secret will serve her in the other world. She will not try again to find out what her friends wish to conceal from her. She brought it on herself. Why did she utter that odious name on recognising me? And Julie, too, she little thought when she asked me to have her name engraved on the knife, and give it her as a keepsake, that it would furnish such deadly evidence against her. Ha, ha! I am well rid of them both. And these papers will prove important. I will see what can be made of them."

And the ruffian, utterly careless of the fate of the woman who had loaded him with favours, and the poor girl who had been his tool so long, noiselessly quitted the room with his accomplice, and they soon disappeared in the direction of the Pont Neuf.

In the meanwhile Julie had been anxiously expecting the arrival of the Count, until, sick of waiting, and presuming that something had occurred to prevent the consummation of the robbery, she returned home. In the morning she was aroused by a rough hand laid on her shoulder, and was ordered to rise at once; and the horror she displayed at the murder of her mistress would have proved to any one but a gendarme her perfect innocence of the deed. She was carried off very speedily to prison, and lay there for weeks. It is true that the drawing up of the *procès verbal* proved two important points in her favour—a lock of hair was found clutched in Madame Leblanc's hand, and a button torn from a dress coat was on the floor. It was, therefore, evident that Julie must have had an accomplice, even if she were implicated in the deed; but the

French police were soon engaged with more important matters than detecting a culprit, and Julie lay in prison for a long while, brooding over her wrongs and nursing her revenge.

The news of her mother's sad fate was very cautiously broken to Helen; but it occasioned her the most bitter remorse. She thought that she was the cause of it by her sudden departure; or, at any rate, had she remained at home she might have prevented it; and she fell into a fever, from which the physician found great difficulty in restoring her. Nor could she be induced to believe that Julie was the guilty party; and though the evidence was so strong against her, she defended her strongly during the protracted inquiries which were instituted by the police. At length the latter gentlemen thought proper to look a little beyond their noses, and laid all the guilt, and very properly, on the Count; but when they went to look for him the bird had flown. It was not, however, till the outbreak of the revolution that Julie regained her liberty, and with it opportunity to carry out a vow she had registered on her arrest, that she would follow M. Jacques and be revenged on him, were it even to the end of the world.

It was a long time before Helen could recover from the shock her system had sustained, and the doubts about her relationship to Charles into which she was again thrown by Julie's departure added greatly to her illness. Nor can I suppose that the revolution promoted her well-being, for nervous young ladies are not particularly fireproof, and the noise of successive discharges of guns and artillery is apt to make them jump and start. But the "Sacred Heart" was not very badly treated after all; it was only occupied by a battalion of chasseurs, whose presence caused great perturbation among the nuns, and made them feel they had lost caste by contact with horrid men. But the soldiers behaved with their accustomed gallantry, and did not even kiss the nuns, which, I fancy, some of the younger ones were rather disappointed at; for they would have dearly liked to commit a mortal sin, were it only for the pleasure of receiving absolution for it afterwards; and, although a few spoons were certainly missing, it was a moot point whether they had not been cast into bullets, and used to kill some of the assailants of the true faith.

As soon as Helen's convalescence was assured she returned to her old place in the parlour, and listened calmly to the many insidious attacks made upon her faith by the Holy

Mother, accompanied by any quantity of sweet cakes and nips of cordials. I can assure my readers that there are many more unpleasant things than an attempted conversion by nuns. I once underwent it, and was most ready to be persuaded—so long as the very excellent Madeira lasted. At last, however, that heavenly liquid was abolished, and coffee produced in its stead; and then, I am sorry to say, my doubts grew doubly strong, and I eventually quitted the convent religion whole. But they are dear old women, that is the truth; and I still remember with unctuous lips that delicious Madeira. There is nothing like the palate for making converts. I fancy another half-dozen would have settled me. If Holy Mother had known that, would she not have laid in a fresh stock? And really, when religious superstitions are abstracted, your nuns are very sensible women, and know a wonderful deal more (at least in England) about the goings on in the naughty world than you would give them credit for. I was quite surprised, I can assure you, at the amount of information which I gained by my lengthened conversations with the amiable old lady who attempted my conversion, more especially in legends of saints, which I hope some day to turn to good profit.

Helen, then, in her weakened state listened placidly to all the fabliaux which the holy mother produced for her special advantage, and I really fancy would have turned anything, even Catholic, for the sake of peace and quietness. Unfortunately your nuns can never go straightforward to any point; they wind round it, and draw perfidious parallels, but cannot say at once, “Ours is the only true religion, and if you don’t believe you’ll be —.” No; they do their spiriting most gently, and those stories which have been read with such eagerness about conventional horrors are mere myths. Just imagine the life nuns lead, and you must acquit them of any inquisitionist propagandism. From my own experience (and that is tolerably extensive) I can vouch that their days are spent in making conserves and then eating them, and their greatest apprehension is that the stock will not last out till the fresh fruit comes in.

Besides, however much the holy mother may have desired to make a convert of Helen, and have the conversion blazoned in the *Tablet* as a further proof that England was rapidly reverting to the only true faith, the express injunctions of the Abbé Condamine would have been sufficient to prevent any steps of the sort. That strange gentleman

entertained the notion that converts were after all but of little service, and that they too often looked back with regret to the old church they had quitted; and, with his heterodox views, I do not see any different opinion he could have formed.

During his visits to Helen, in which he gave her much sage advice, though in the gentlest possible voice, the Abbé fancied he noticed she was pining for the world, and soon drew from her that she felt anxious to gain her own livelihood, as she could not bear to be a burden on her kind friends. With a heavy sigh, doubtless intended for the perversity of human nature, the old Abbé went away to look for some congenial employment for Helen, and, by dint of indefatigable exertions, soon secured her a post for which she was admirably adapted. An English reader was required for the Princess Bertha of Pumpernickel, and he secured the refusal. Helen at first felt timid about taking such an exalted post, and had grave apprehensions about her fitness to approach royalty; but the Abbé soon drove such thoughts from her mind by telling her that so long as she did her duty she would be sure to succeed, and she therefore gladly accepted the offer.

The salary offered was liberal enough—that is, for a German court—and looked very large when reckoned in florins; but there were stipulations attaching to the office which diminished its value. In the table of etiquette sent by the first lady of the bed-chamber it was expressly stated that Helen must never approach her royal pupil except in white kid gloves, and these must not be worn twice; so Helen, after going into a mental calculation, found that very little of her salary would be saved. However, as she only wanted a home, and was sick of Paris, she was very pleased to go to Gürkenhof, where I will leave her for the present, and take up the tangled web of my hero's fortunes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

▲ GLIMPSE OF BOHEMIA.

WHEN we last saw Charles Dashwood he was seated in a railway carriage, hurrying at full speed (for a continental train) to the assistance of his beleaguered Helen. He had abundant opportunity for meditation, what with delays for inspection of passports and luggage, and I cannot say that his thoughts were of the most pleasant nature. Although his pride sustained him, and urged upon him that he was in the right when he resisted Sir Amyas's offer, there is not one among us who can give up £250 per annum in esse and £20,000 in posse without a sharp twinge of disappointment. Still the elasticity of youth buoyed Charles up. He fancied it was impossible for his uncle to remain inexorable, and that with time he would come round again; and if not, well, he could work for his living like other people, and no doubt would succeed.

It never occurred to my young friend, however, that, though he might be perfectly willing to work, his education had not adapted him for any settled profession. What earthly good would his Latin and Greek do him when in want of a dinner? He thought at times that he might turn usher in a school, so low had he, theoretically, descended from the pedestal of his pride; but he had perused the "Vicar of Wakefield," and entertained strong suspicions that the habits of the last century, as Noll described them, might be strictly referrible to the present day. In short, he did not know what to do, and, as the next best thing, he did not think at all about the future. He knew that he should have to earn his livelihood, but the prospect did not terrify him. He had £100 in his pocket and the £5000 in reserve, and what did he care?

I do not know whether any of my readers can remember a peculiar arrangement on the Belgian line, just beyond Liège, by which you used to be pulled up a hill on one side and let down on the other by means of ropes. I daresay every traveller has speculated on the possibility of the rope breaking, and what would become of the train in that case. Well, on Mr. Dashwood's journey the speculation was con-

verted into a certainty. The rope *did* break, and the train rushed backwards down the hill at a furious rate, and ended by running off the line and turning head over heels. Of course there was the usual amount of shocking accidents, and several Belgian peasants were killed, though the account published in the *State Gazette* limited the accident to a few broken ribs. But the more important fact to us is that Charley broke his leg in the mêlée, and was laid up for six weeks in a Liège hotel. His irritation at the delay prevented his recovery in some measure, and when he started for Paris once more his leg gave him abundant proof, by shooting pains, that he must be careful with it.

He was not long, we may be sure, before he visited Madame Leblanc's old apartment, and was horrified at learning the awful fate which had befallen her. For a long while he could obtain no trace of Helen, and at last only succeeded by a reference to the police; but he was just as far from his dear girl as ever, even when he had discovered her abode; for the good nuns sedulously denied her being there, and, though they allowed she had resided with them for awhile, she had left and gone they knew not whither. In fact, during this whole time she was lying on a bed of sickness, and they were horrified at the idea of a young man wishing to see their *protégée*; so, on the principle that the end justifies the means, they told a deliberate falsehood, for which I have no doubt they performed considerable penance. The poor creatures fancied they were acting for the best, as they wished to keep Helen's mind free from all sinful thoughts, for her recovery was almost despaired of, and the consequence of their step was, as usual, that they caused her much mental anxiety, and led her to believe that her Charles had forgotten her.

My hero, being now quite his own master, spent his time in Paris in a lordly manner, after the fashion of young English gentlemen, and I have no doubt amused himself greatly; but I need not allude to more than one adventure, as intimately connected with this history, and which introduced him into a very new phase of Parisian life; in other words, he formed the acquaintance of some distinguished Bohemians.

Charles had been to the Odéon to see Madame Georges, then the wreck of her former self, in her celebrated character of Marguerite in the *Tour de Nesle*, and felt some considerable amusement at a very old woman representing the lovely queen. Still there were at times traces of the old

fire visible, and at last he forgot the actress in the interest of the scene. Now, the *Tour de Nesle* is not one of the most comic of plays, and the idea is thoroughly French; so that when Charles left the theatre he felt very thirsty from excitement, and turned into an estaminet for some limonade gazeuse.

He noticed three or four blackguard-looking fellows in the little room, who fixed their eyes upon him when he entered, and evidently displayed great interest in his movements. Like a foolish fellow, brought up to place blind confidence in the police, he unbuttoned his coat to see what time it was, and displayed a very handsome gold chain. After awhile he thought he had better be moving, and walked onwards in the direction of the Pont Neuf.

I do not know what may be the present state of public safety in Paris, but I do know that in 1848 the police had other matters to attend to than preventing crime, and whenever I went over to pay a visit to some student friends in the Quartier Latin I always took care, on returning home, to walk down the centre of the bridge with a life preserver hanging from my wrist, and gave a very wide berth to the statue of Henri IV., behind which some very suspicious persons were always lurking. They may have been quite respectable beggars, and I might have made an acquaintance as interesting as Hauff's Bettlerin du Pont des Arts; but, having a most selfish regard for my skin, I preferred to pursue such investigations in the daytime, and always drew a very deep breath of relief when I left the dangerous bridge behind me, and found myself in comparative safety on the broad quay.

But my hero had no thoughts of this nature. He imagined Paris as secure by night as by day, and walked along gently whistling, and stopping at intervals to enjoy the magnificent prospect of the river and city. He fancied now and then he heard smothered footsteps behind him; but, on turning and seeing nobody, he laughed at the idea and strolled onwards. The consequence was that, when he reached the shady recesses of the statue, he felt a hand thrown artistically round his neck, and a strong ray of light was reflected from a very ugly knife, which just missed his shoulder-bone.

Charley, however, did not for a moment lose his presence of mind; but, giving a tremendous kick backwards, as vicious as a horse attacked by wolves, he soon disengaged himself of his first assailant, and turned to find

himself attacked by four ruffians. There was not a moment to lose if he valued his life, so Charles hit out furiously with his left, and soon floored one of the fellows. Planting his foot with a stamp right in the centre of his face, he then commenced offensive operations on the others; but he soon found that they were more than his match, for his injured leg gave way at the critical moment. He felt, too, that he had received several flesh wounds, from which the blood was streaming down into his boots, and a nervous apprehension that he was losing ground and strength over-powered him. Still for all that he did not release the ruffian beneath his foot, whose face he kept on savagely pounding with his heel in spite of his cries for mercy. Charles would as soon have let a mad dog loose again on society.

Suddenly, when my hero felt that it was all over, and that he might prepare for death, assistance came to his relief. The ruffians had been so engaged on their victim that they had not noticed the approach of a stranger, who, however, soon evidenced his presence by the most extraordinary evolutions with his legs and a big stick. He seemed as if moved by a string, like the marionnettes, and capered about in the wildest and most effectual manner. At one second Charles could see his toe artistically inserted beneath one fellow's chin, which sent him spinning, and the next the stick came across a face. The battle was over; the three assassins ran off, and left their accomplice in the lurch.

"Do you think, Monsieur, you are strong enough to help me lift this gentleman?" the stranger asked Charley.

He naturally presumed that his ally intended to hand the ruffian over to the police; but he soon found his mistake. The wretched man was lifted by his legs and arms, and, with a vigorous heave, he was sent over the coping of the bridge, to be caught in the Morgue nets.

"There, I think that will save any unpleasantness with those scamps of police," the stranger said, with a sweet, conscious smile of duty fulfilled. "But you are wounded, Monsieur; pray lean on my arm, and I will take you to my room close by. I am a student of medicine, and shall be delighted to do you any service."

Charles, who now began to grow very weak from loss of blood, gladly accepted the offer, and walked across the bridge supported by his new friend's nervous arm. They found a stray fiacre, probably waiting for the ruffians who

had been so utterly defeated. Into this they mounted, and the stranger merely saying, "Golgotha," which the driver evidently understood, they drove off.

Golgotha, alas! no longer exists. It was removed in 1854, in deference to the emperor's restorative mania. It stood on the site of an old abbey, which had been pulled down in the revolution, and the ground sold as national property. An old lady had purchased it for a handful of assignats, representing about twenty shillings of our currency, and she had built on it a vast barrack, which immediately was invaded by an army of students; but, though the house was let from attic to cellar, Madame did not derive much profit from it, for students have a morbid objection to paying rent, and declined leaving to make room for more regular tenants. The only revenge she could take was by never doing any repairs; and Golgotha, so called from the number of skulls it contained, at the time of which I am writing was in a fearfully dilapidated state. There was a tradition attached to the house that the tiles had once been repaired at the instigation of an attic tenant who really paid his rent, and was regarded with intense respect in consequence; but he had to display extraordinary resources of mind before he succeeded. It was only by digging a hole in the floor, and letting the water which entered by the roof drip down on the next lodger, that the old lady was induced to lay out a few francs, which formed the standing subject of her complaints whenever she alluded to her property.

Golgotha could have told strange tales, if it had liked, about the generations of painters who had passed their novitiate beneath its roof. The great names of the French school might be detected on the filthy walls, traced in charcoal, to evidence the passage of such men as Gericault, Eugène Delacroix, and Paul Delaroche. These titles of honour were carefully respected by their successors; and though they might satisfy their artistic craving in designing magnificent subjects by means of a burnt stick, they never effaced the traditional names which gave such renown to Golgotha.

Among the accredited stories attaching to Golgotha, I may mention that the inhabitants amused themselves once by painting an immense white dog with tiger stripes, letting him loose with a tin kettle tied to his tail, and terrifying the whole quarter. On another occasion they turned out with Bedouin burnouses and long chibukhs, and gravely

seated themselves on the square of St. Germain-des-Prés, to the horror of the faithful who were going to mass. At the time I was an habitué of Golgotha merry games and high jinks were carried on; but, alas! they have been done away with entirely by the passion for renovation and that brooding insecurity which hangs over Paris, and renders all the young men discontented and prematurely old. Absit omen!

When Charley alighted with his companion at the doorway (for there was no porter—he had been long before placed on the shelf as a luxury, and, indeed, no one would hold the post, to be tormented incessantly by the artists), the young student turned with a smile, and said, “I am afraid you must be careful in going up; there are various clever mantraps for duns on the stairs, and I fancy Jules, my companion, tore up two or three boards to boil his coffee with this afternoon. But wait; I will procure a light.”

And, knocking at the first door, he coolly walked in, seized the lamp, and emerged with it, in spite of the vociferous protestations of the owner.

Charles, on ascending the stairs, was truly grateful to his companion for his forethought, for a stranger to Golgotha would infallibly have broken his neck in the dark. The walls were decayed and filthy in the extreme, the rain and moisture pouring down them in streams, while the banisters had been broken away in many places, and the absent stairs yawned to engulf the daring intruder. However, after a long and painful ascent, they reached the sixth floor, and Charles was glad to rest from his unwonted exertion.

After my hero had taken off his coat François examined his wounds, which were numerous, but not at all dangerous, and a bountiful ablution, and bandages which the student made by tearing up his other shirt, soon furnished him relief. Then Charles had an opportunity to look round him at the strange scene in which he found himself, and he certainly had good reason to feel surprised. It was a spacious room, with a sloping roof at either end, and leaving two walls, on which Jules could display his artistic efforts. His materials appeared restricted to the primitive burnt stick, for there was nothing else to reveal that he was an artist. The medical student displayed his department of science in an interesting collection of grinning skulls, several of them wearing a fez, while all had a well-coloured pipe stuck between their jaws, which gave them a horribly grotesque

aspect. Here and there were scattered thigh bones and other pleasing anatomical objects, while one huge bone was evidently employed for stirring up the wood fire.

The furniture was extremely simple, and evidently chosen with a strict attention to necessity. It consisted of two beds, one in each corner, not particularly cleanly, and bearing traces that they were converted into sofas during the day. There was a table, too, which had once boasted four legs, but one of these was now absent, and its place occupied by bricks. There were also three chairs, one of them, however, being placed so cleverly against the wall that you felt certain, if it were moved, it must come down with a run. The garderobe, too, was remarkably chaste in its design, and strictly practical, for it merely consisted of a cord running across the room, and sustaining the working-day blouses, which formed the sole change of attire our student friends possessed. But, for all that, they were extremely happy, and not a sign betrayed Jules' annoyance because his chum had been absent so long, and prevented his going out by having on the only presentable pair of boots. They both looked round with a comical grin when they noticed Charles gazing with surprise at the strange quarters in which he found himself, and the artist then added,—

“I daresay, Monsieur, your ideas of a studio are sadly upset by this truly naked reality; but you must remember I am in a state of transition. Besides, the place is very healthy, and you enjoy——”

“A magnificent view of across the road,” the medical student interposed. “Come, come, Jules, you must not try to humbug Monsieur. He can read the truth.”

“I try to humbug him! Surely Monsieur must be aware that it is our nature to indulge in *blague*. However, I must confess that the place might be more comfortable, and, had my glorious scheme of portrait painting succeeded, I should have had a magnificently furnished apartment; but though I had selected all the furniture, and spent a week in assorting the various articles, the rogue of an upholsterer would not let me have it without ready money. I explained to him my position, and told him that my scheme of portrait painting at ten francs a head would be an infallible success; but he wouldn’t listen—perhaps it was all the better for him, as the portraits proved a failure.”

“How was that?” asked Charles, considerably amused by his new companions.

"Imagine, Monsieur," said the artist, with a look of comic despair. "I had induced the grocer's wife round the corner to visit my humble apartment, and had promised to paint her *en Grecque* for only eight francs. My decoy bird was all ready, and a vista of success opened before me. Madame came punctually, and was already seated, when that villain Fredonneau across the passage spoiled all. A knock came at the door—I thoughtlessly said *Entrez*, and in walked a nude model, asking if a St. Christopher were not wanted here! Oh, it was my ruin! But Monsieur is probably thirsty."

And, without awaiting a reply, Jules rushed to a cupboard, produced a battered cornopean, and began the most infernal tantara-ra out of the door which could be imagined. An old man soon made his appearance, to whom the artist merely said, "Beer, slave; fly at once!"

"But, Monsieur," said the little man, apologetically.

"Fly—be off at once, I say!"

"Will Monsieur kindly give me the money? He will remember there was a slight difficulty this morning with Madame Ducoste."

"Son of Satan! how often have I told thee that a student spurns such ignoble means of barter as money? Tell Madame, however, if she be indisposed to satisfy my legitimate thirst, that the *Vert Galant* is nearly completed, and that it will bring her in countless thousands. All Paris will flock to behold my masterpiece, and great will be the consumption of beer of March!"

With an indescribable shrug the little man quitted the room; but it seemed that the appeal was successful, for he soon returned loaded with bottles, which he deposited on the table, and discreetly retired, feeling somewhat alarmed at the sight of an upraised skull, which François was evidently preparing to bring into collision with his own.

"Yes, Monsieur," Jules said, turning to Charles, "such are some of the resources to which high art is compelled to fly when it wishes to quench its thirst. Behold here the result of my morning's labours."

And he produced an exquisite painting, a pictorial riddle, which Charles was artist enough to see was worth a hecatomb of beer bottles. It represented a glass crowned with a garland of laurel leaves, and the calembour was palpable.

"But Monsieur must be weakened by his loss of blood," said the medical student, "and would be glad to lie down.

Jules, you must turn into Fredonneau's room to-night, while I stop to attend to my guest."

All Charles's protestations were in vain. One bed was given up to him, while Jules took a mattress off the other, and dragged it after him across the corridor. The shouts which hailed his appearance proved that his quarrel with Fredonneau had not been of a very deadly nature, and soon the whole of the house appeared to be hushed in sleep. François made himself as comfortable as he could on the sacking, and meditated hugely as he smoked a pipe, while Charles, exhausted by his wounds and the past adventure, dropped off into a restless sleep, from which he was soon aroused by a pistol-shot.

"Don't be alarmed," François said with a benignant smile; "I was only scaring away the rats which were invading your bed. As a stranger you might feel annoyed by them, or else I should have left them to their devices. They must be fools, though, to come here, for there's precious little for them to forage. Ha, ha, my friend, you're caught this time!" he added, as a skull came tumbling from the table, and rolled about the ground. "I thought that piece of Roquefort would be too powerful for your olfactory nerves."

He picked up the skull, and dragged from it a huge rat, which had been caught in this novel trap, and, after quietly drawing a knife across its throat, and muttering something about dissection and subjects, he fell off to sleep, in which Charley was too glad to follow his example.

CHAPTER XIX.

SIMPLE CYMON.

WHEN Charles Dashwood awoke after his restless night in Golgotha his wounds felt stiff, and his old enemy, the broken leg, gave him incipient warnings of ensuing confinement. François, too, on examining his patient, looked as grave as a medical student can look, and suggested that he should send for further advice. Hence Charles decided on returning to his hotel, and, after a hearty parting from his new chums, and repeated promises to pay them a visit as soon as he got about again, he was carried down the

steep stairs with some difficulty by four men, and conveyed at a funereal pace in a fiacre to the Hôtel Windsor.

For several weeks he lay in a very unpleasant position, for there is hardly anything so disagreeable as being ill in a strange country, with only hired sympathisers around you, who smooth your pillow as if calculating how much the action is worth, and stint you in your stimulants for their own gratification. After awhile, however, the Marquis of Lancing found Charles out, and became a constant visitor by his bedside. I do not think that his conversation was of that peculiarly cheering nature calculated to improve a convalescent's health, but Charley picked up wonderfully by having some one to talk to who had known his dear Helen.

The Marquis was last from Vienna, where he had left his friend Fitz paying strong court and making very real love to a Miss Delaney, "a lovely girl," the Marquis remarked, "and has £30,000, my boy." No wonder that Fitz was enamoured with *les beaux yeux de sa cassette*. If he could catch such a girl as that he would be able to carry on for another two years, and by that time he might have succeeded his father, Lord Levant. There were only three lives between him, and more unlikely things have come to pass than such a consummation.

Charley was delighted, as you may suppose, at the Marquis's repeated allusions to the fair Helen, and though the young nobleman still limped from his wound, he had the manliness to confess that he had deserved worse treatment for his conduct toward her. Reflection had led him to doubt her love for him, and he very magnanimously recommended Charles to go in and win, which my hero had every intention of doing so soon as he found where the lady of his love was.

Charley and his friend also hit upon a famous plan to drive dull care away by playing piquet, a game which seems to have been invented for the special behoof of persons confined to their bedroom, for I do not think those in good health could play it any length of time and live. One afternoon while thus engaged a tap came to the door, which flew open suddenly, and a very lovely young lady made her appearance. She exclaimed, "My dearest Charles!" and then suddenly noticing the presence of a stranger, a roseate blush suffused her exquisite face. The Marquis rose in great embarrassment, and contrived to upset the table and a bottle of Beaune over his legs; and the young lady, lost to all sense of propriety,

fell back in a chair, and gave way to a hearty burst of laughter.

"My dearest Susan, this *is* kind of you. I did not know you were in Paris," said Charles, making a feeble effort to rise from his easy chair. "How did you find me out? how did you hear of my accident?"

The Marquis, in the meantime, felt very much embarrassed at his awkward position. Indeed, it is not pleasant to face a stranger, and that stranger a lovely laughing girl with your tr—u—rs saturated with Beaune, and feel that she is laughing at you, and you cannot blame her for it.

"Susan, dearest, allow me to introduce you to the Marquis of Lancing. He is a very good fellow, although he is so peculiarly situated just at present. Lancing, let me make you known to my sister, Susan Dashwood."

A low bow from the lady was the only notice she took of the introduction, and the Marquis, reckless of the consequences, seized Charles's dressing gown, in which he strove to hide the traces of his accident. At length Susan recovered from her exhausting fit of laughter, and said,—

"Only guess, my dear boy. I had a letter from Helen this morning, dated from Gürkenhof. She is engaged with the Princess Bertha, and writes in good spirits. She is very anxious to hear from you, and said I might probably find you here. The Colonel brought me in his carriage, and, when we found you were here and ill, dropped me while he went to make some calls. We only arrived yesterday, and don't you think I am a good sister for calling on you so soon, when I want new bonnets and a hundred other things which can only be procured in Paris?"

After this long tirade Miss Susan kissed her brother very affectionately, causing thereby a slight tinge of envy to the Marquis, and then continued:—

"But you have not told me yet about your accident. What could you have been about, careless boy, to get yourself into such trouble? The Colonel is very vexed with you for quarrelling with Sir Amyas, but I have taken your part. A likely thing, indeed, that you should be forced into marrying a girl you did not love, merely because she had money and you wanted it. I asked the Colonel whether he intended to try the same compulsion with me; but the dear old man gave me a kiss, and said I might die an old maid if I liked. Poor Jane! I wonder if she has got out safely;" and a very pretty sigh concluded the speech.

Charles gave his sister a hurried account of his ad-

ventures, which caused the young lady to go through various phases of alarm and admiration, wound up by an expression of her opinion that some London police ought to be sent out to watch over Englishmen in Paris. When Charley ended his harangue by expressing his thanks to the Marquis for his kindness in sitting with him so constantly, Susan turned her magnificent eyes full upon that young gentleman, rendering him peculiarly uncomfortable, and causing him to wish that he was at the bottom of the sea, or anywhere beyond the range of those liquid, laughter-beaming eyes.

But Susan was a good-hearted girl, and any kindness shown to her brother struck a responsive chord in her own breast; so she treated the Marquis with extreme amiability, and that young gentleman was soon in the seventh heaven of delight, Helen's image being rapidly effaced by the flesh and blood incarnation of loveliness which now beamed upon him. She was just the girl to suit him; in fact, he felt none of that nervousness to which he had been subject when talking with Helen, who was so fond of quoting poetry and recommending him to read Elizabeth Browning. Now, Susan was a capital girl, who chattered about the opera, and regulated her conversation by the range of his ability, and so the Marquis soon felt quite at home, and deeply regretted the unwelcome announcement that the carriage was waiting for Miss Dashwood. However, he handed her down the stairs, and hoped to gain an introduction to the Colonel. If so, he was sadly disappointed; for Susan jumped lightly in with a hurried good morning, and soon forgot, I daresay, that any such being as the Most Noble the Marquis of Lancing existed, which very plainly proves that she was not of the common run of girls, who are too apt to conjure up bright visions at the mere introduction to a lord. I know two rather good-looking girls, of respectable rank in society, who, because they once flirted with a booby peer, who was residing with a neighbouring clergyman, have looked down on the common clay ever since, and are now in a fair way of dying old maids. Something seems to tell me that this will not be Susan Dashwood's fate, in spite of her protestations. Her beauty was not designed to be wasted on pet dogs, nor her good heart to find an outlet in merely giving shillings to beggar children. We shall see.

And now that I am beginning to take an interest in Miss Susan Dashwood, because I believe she will honestly

carry out those relations for which women were sent into the world, I may as well describe her. She was wonderfully like her brother, with the same classical face, and the same proneness to laughter to redeem it; while her eye was of the purest sapphire, and you fancied you could see a heaven in it. She was anything but thin; on the contrary, many virgins expressed their amiable pity at her sad want of genteel outline; but for that Susan did not care. She was, in a word, one of those exquisite creatures whom Mr. Leech has immortalised in the pages of *Punch*, and whom we all fall in love with immediately, in our despair of ever finding the delicious original.

It may be assumed, by the way, that, in two or three allusions I have made to that much maligned class of "old maids," I have evinced an intention to disparage them. Far be the thought from me. I regard the old "maids of merry England" as one of the greatest institutions of my beloved country. There may be among my readers some young men of the "fast" school. Now, I put it to them, how could that fastness be developed on the gubernatorial allowance, were it not for the occasional tips bestowed by maiden aunts? Hence I protest, and call on my youthful readers of the male sex to join with me in protesting, against that vile libel on old maids which once a year disgraces our stationers' windows. The sketch to which I allude I will strive to describe in as few words as possible. A lady of withered and sour aspect, bearing a strong likeness to a crab-apple crossed in love, is holding up by the wings a diminutive and excessively nude Cupid, reminding me forcibly of what Tom Thumb must be (*minus* the wings) when entering the bath. In the other hand she wields a rod, one blow of which would annihilate the harmless infant. The background of the picture is occupied by apes, parrots, dogs, cats, &c., the popular attributes of old maids. At the foot are some verses, which I shall not insult my readers by quoting, but which contain more than a passing allusion to the employment predestined for old unmarried ladies in another and decidedly worse world.

And while on the subject of valentines let me remark that, though our harmless eccentricities may be fair game for the valentine concoctors, why on earth cannot some one who writes grammar at least be employed on the versification? I generally supposed that a disregard for that useful element was the exclusive property of lords; but I find,

to my sorrow, that authors are trying to place themselves on a level with the aristocracy in that respect, although they have been so long pining beneath the cold shade. In the time of Horace the greatest reverence was due to boys. That is no longer possible in our fast age, when no such things as boys exist, and the reverence is, therefore, transferred to those great luminaries who delight us by their poesy; but how can I admire a poet who rhymes "Aurora" with "floorer," and indulges in other amenities too numerous to particularise, as the catalogues say, of the cockney poetic school?

But this is a sad digression. I only intended to throw out a few hints on the subject of old maids for the consideration of the author of "Things Not Generally Known," and I find myself venting my wrath on valentines. Somehow the love passages between Susan and the Marquis suggested the idea, and I must ask my readers' patience and forbearance. I will strive not to run off at a tangent in such an irresponsible manner for the future; but the valentine nuisance is my *bête noir*, and I intend to put it down some day with all the energy of a Sir Peter Laurie suppressing suicide.

The Marquis revealed an intense admiration for Susan, and bored her brother terribly to get well soon, that they might go together and call on the Dacres. Charles took compassion on him, and regained the use of his leg rapidly. Perhaps his wish to hear something more about Helen aided his recovery, but I cannot say. They soon proceeded to call on the Colonel, who received them like the true-hearted gentleman he was, and asked them to dinner, when the Marquis drank in fresh draughts of love with every glass of champagne. In short, he was in a very terrible way, and the character which Susan had for sarcasm did not deter him from paying her the most devoted attention.

He was his own master now. The Dowager Marchioness had a terrific explosion with him, when last in England on a hurried visit, because he declined to marry a red-haired niece of her own, and was nursing her disappointment in building churches and schools, to which the Marquis had not the slightest objection, as they naturally advanced the value of his property. Land-owners are very well aware of this fact, or else we should not have it so frequently trumpeted in our papers that Mr. So-and-so has liberally given the site for a new church, for which public subscriptions

are requested. Build a church and a public-house in the middle of Salisbury Plain, and you will have a large city collected round them within ten years.

But Charles was not disposed to be always dangling at his sister's side. After he had written Helen a long letter, in which he did not forget to enumerate the sacrifices he had made for her sake, he insisted on the Marquis accompanying him to Golgotha, and heartily enjoyed the blank looks of despair with which he surveyed the walls of that classic establishment. Jules and François had taken to a new profession, at least it seemed so, from their being diligently engaged in casting bullets, from which they could hardly be drawn by the offer of a dinner at Philippe's. However, they eventually assented, and Jules, by borrowing a sovereign to buy a pair of boots, completed the amazement with which the Marquis regarded the scene.

I do really think those Paris students are the best fellows in the world, although I am not disposed to regard them with the same notion of their social value as Mr. Bayle St. John has done in his "Purple Tints of Paris." I certainly spent a very happy time of my life with Jules and François; but I do not think I would prefer going back to that system now. We may be all of us more or less Bohemians; but if so, I should prefer to pass my Zingaro life in a cleaner spot than poor old Golgotha. How strange it is, though, that dirt and jollity appear such inseparable companions, else the men who now live in our inns of court, and certainly are not affected with lowness of spirits, would be inclined to have their stairs washed—an operation which has not been performed within the memory of the oldest laundress.

In his anxiety to amuse the Marquis, Charles called in the aid of the students to show him a portion of the night side of Paris. Among other places they visited was the *Café des Aveugles* in the Palais Royal, the Marquis smoothing over the plebeian condescension by expressing a desire to study the lower classes. But if he fancied he formed any idea of the substrata of Parisian life at the café he was greatly mistaken, for the seats are covered over with purple velvet, as if you were at the *Maison Dorée*, and even smoking is prohibited. The blouses took their places by the side of their young ladies, and drank tea or coffee, while the six blind men composing the orchestra began playing. All at once a young man, attired as an Indian, sprang up among them, and played the drum in a most

irresponsible manner. He was followed by a ventriloquist, who held a lengthened conversation with a doll. Then came a boy, whose hair grew half way down his back, who held a pompous address to the company. He told them how he had been brought from the coast of Africa, and owed eternal thanks to the brave captain who had nursed him in sickness, and to the brave French nation, who had received him with such kindness. Here his memory broke down, and he came to a somewhat ignominious conclusion by begging some *sous*. The evening's proceedings terminated with a vaudeville, performed by six persons on a stage not two yards long and one deep. Charles quite agreed with the Marquis that they had seen enough of the French people as here represented, and they all went off in a body to the Salle Valentino to study another and far more agreeable phase of French society.

The Marquis, however, was not led by these amusements to neglect Susan Dashwood: he was her constant attendant, and I fancy she did treat him a little more mercifully than the swarm of young men who buzzed about her. He was so harmless, so unassuming, that her heart smote her when she was going to say something sarcastic; but, as the odds are he would not have understood her, I do not think she need have been so scrupulous. Evidently Susan is growing in a fair way to upset all her established theories. Take care, young lady; you must remember that pity is akin to love, and the little god may invade your heart *subito*, whence you will not be able to dislodge him.

I should not like to take on myself to affirm positively that the Marquis's ten thousand a year did not throw some weight into the scale; for, although Susan was not at all the girl to marry a man whom she felt she did not love, still the prestige of a marquise may have had some share in enkindling that love, which was with her the *sine qua non* of matrimony. We can, therefore, safely leave her under the influence of the master passion to find fresh charms in her Theodore, and time will show whether she write herself Marchioness of Lancing. What do you say, O my lady readers?

Helen's retreat was very awkward for my hero, for he dared not visit Gürkenhof at present, while his uncle was still angry with him, and his hope of seeing Helen must be deferred for awhile. Under the circumstances he therefore thought it advisable to proceed to London, and look after the £5000, the reversion of which he could, at any rate,

borrow money on in the meanwhile. What he was going to do was quite an open question ; but the Marquis had promised him his influence, and he had a vague idea of accepting some government employment so soon as he had amused himself sufficiently. But he did not feel any great inclination for work at present, not even for that amount which is required from a government clerk. A paragraph in the *Times* also quickened his movements, by proving to him that his uncle was determined to punish him as far as lay in his power. The old bachelor, who had defied matrimony so long, had at length fallen into the net—he had married Mdlle. Sophie Durlacher, Ober hof Sängerin at the Gürkenhof theatre ! and he who had so long been the terror of married men was in a fair way to experience the sensation himself.

“ Come,” thought Charles, “ he need not have been so particular about Helen being a gambler’s daughter. He has not looked so very high himself. Well, I wish him joy. At the age of sixty-five he has married—to have an heir.”

And, remembering a bitter French sarcasm, Charles grew consoled, and did not seriously take to heart this downfall of all his hopes. As he thought his £5000 would be an eternal source for him to draw upon, the loss of a title was not of such great consequence. However, as he was rapidly approaching years of discretion, he thought his presence in England would be desirable, and, at the same time, he visited Mr. Fowler’s shop diligently, and studied the columns of *Bell’s Life*, where so many advertisements are weekly addressed to the “ Heirs to Entailed Estates,” &c.

The Marquis, it is true, in his hopes of succeeding with Helen, would have gladly done anything in his power to aid Charley ; but that young man had a natural repugnance to accept favours, and, though he had consented to employ his friend’s influence in procuring himself some government employment, I do not think he seriously meant it. Nor did he aid the Marquis in ascertaining the real state of Susan’s heart. He had a shrewd suspicion that the young lady was undergoing a considerable struggle with her heart, and any inquiry into her intentions at the present critical moment would probably incline the balance against the Marquis. As Charley thought it a very good thing for Susan to be so comfortably settled, he felt no inclination to throw a chance away, and hence the Marquis, much to his terror, was left to fight his love battles without an ally.

But the Marquis’s love was certainly having a favourable influence over him, and even if he did not succeed in gaining

Susan's hand, his morals were profiting greatly by the suspense. He had not paid Mdlle. Coralie a visit for three weeks, and when invited to various very pleasant supper parties declined with the firmness of a stoic. His friends could not imagine what was the matter with the Marquis, so great was the change that had taken place in him; and when the news spread that he had actually been seen at the English church, they thought it high time to summon Fitz to the rescue.

But the Honourable Captain Fitzspavin had other matters to attend to more interesting to himself. Another life had fallen in, and there were only two between him and the title. This decided the wavering state of Miss Flora's affections, and she had consented to become Mrs. Fitzspavin, much to that amiable gentleman's delight. He had already instituted several ingenious arrangements for buying up his turf debts at seven shillings and sixpence in the pound, and looked forward with delight to the moment when he could revisit England, and become once more the ornament of the betting ring.

CHAPTER XX.

MARCH, 1848.

THINGS were going on with their accustomed lassitude at Gürkenhof. Helen had been enjoying comparative happiness for some time in the company of the Princess, who had taken a great fancy to her, at which I am not at all surprised, for none could come into contact with my heroine and refrain from loving her. The manners of court were so simple and unaffected that Helen soon recovered from her terror, and was surprised to find herself talking ere long to a princess with the familiarity of a sister. The Grand Duke, too, had honoured Helen with a lengthened stare, and took repeated opportunities to converse with her, and altogether Helen was happy.

It is possible, however, that the strange scenes which preceded Helen's arrival at Gürkenhof had put the court on its best behaviour, and rendered Helen so peculiarly at home. I mean the events which occurred in March, 1848; for the good people of Gürkenhof were not an inch behind

their other German brethren in making fools of themselves.

The citizens of Gürkenhof had a habit, which I am sorry to say is not peculiar to that residenz, of holding what they irreverently term an "eleven o'clock mass" in the various beer-houses. And here it was that the first news of the French revolution surprised them, as it flashed along the wire, to carry confusion and alarm to the uttermost confines of Germany. For awhile the citizens could hardly credit the news. It appeared to them impossible for a nation to rise against its monarch; but when the account was confirmed, and the telegraph announced in addition that Louis Philippe had fled the capital, the excitement was unbounded. Every man suddenly hit on the idea that he had some grudge to settle with government, and all united in one common feeling that some great change must take place; but what it was to be nobody could take upon him to say.

With the next morning the trains brought in thousands of *frondeurs* to Gürkenhof, who, in the consciousness of newly acquired liberty, besieged the palace and chamber of deputies, anxious for they knew not what, and unable to embody their trivial complaints in any tangible form. At length some enlightened members of the left, foreseeing an opening by which they could attain to power, put themselves at the head of the movement, and a series of resolutions was drawn up; while the milliners wore their fingers out in forming cockades of the national Schwarz-Roth-Gold, which the people mounted with intense pride, regarding themselves doubtlessly as tremendous democrats.

I happened to be in Gürkenhof at this time, and having been accustomed to English election mobs, and to fights between the blues and the yellows, the scene presented but slight novelty. I spent my time very harmlessly in watching the mob which surrounded the palace, and admiring the perfect calmness which prevailed. A show of resistance to the people had been made by calling out a squadron of dragoons; but they soon fraternised under the potent influences of beer. And it was a very picturesque scene which the palace court presented. The houses were draped in the national colours, and every flag which the city boasted was displayed to enhance the effect; while mob orators, mounted on casks or hanging from the lamp-posts, harangued the people, and tried to teach them their rights, which apparently consisted in keeping the beer-houses

open all night, and enjoying a license to shoot sparrows gratis.

But within the palace the scene was very different. The poor old Duke was paralysed with terror, and trying to face death a la Louis Seize, though lamentably failing in the attempt, while his daughter hung round him in tears and white satin, and would not be pacified. To her, who had been kept so sedulously aloof from the people, the worthy bootmakers and tailors who were rending the air with shouts for liberty, assumed the aspect of so many Marats and Dantons, and she hourly expected the upraising of the guillotine and the summons to execution. Poor girl! she would not be calmed, even by the encouraging offers of the court paladins to rush out and clear the courtyard; and even the Count von Eckstein, whom it was rumoured she looked upon so favourably, could not now gain a glance of recognition from her.

By degrees, however, the Grand Duke regained some slight courage, as he found that his very worthless person ran no risk of immediate separation from its head, and he listened to the advice of his newly constituted ministers, who recommended him to promise everything. "The gentlemen outside," he said, "were at perfect liberty to do as they pleased if they would only let him leave Gürkenhof;" and, muttering something about the Countess of Tulpenhain, he wrapped himself up in a footman's great coat, and quitted the palace by a back door, doubtlessly to seek comfort from that lady, who, being born of the people, felt no terror at its present aspect.

Some judicious placards were then drawn up and posted about the city. The few troops were consigned to barracks, which order they obeyed as they thought proper, and the people had carried out its very bloodless revolution. With the concessions a renewed feeling of devotion to the Grand Duke was aroused, and he was regarded as the father of his country. A body-guard of stout burghers voluntarily enrolled themselves to defend the palace from invasion, whom the Grand Duke gratefully received, and poured out wine for them with his own royal hands. In short, the reconciliation was perfect; and, as the police had wisely disappeared at the first signal of danger, the beer-houses were open all night, and one general intoxication inaugurated the new system.

When the Grand Duke appeared on the balcony the next morning with the national cockade, and addressed his

faithful people in a long speech carefully prepared for him, and containing any quantity of allusions to free Germany and the glorious future, the hopes of the few republicans went down to zero; while the people grasped at the hint, and were deluded once more by the fallacy of German unity. Within a week the whole of Pumpernickel was converted into one huge debating club, and the number of new papers which started as soon as the censorship was abolished was perfectly astounding. So far as German coalition was concerned the French republic was sadly disappointed.

Before long a rumour spread among the people, no one could tell whence it came, that 30,000 red-trousered gentry were assembled on the Rhenish frontier, and were prepared to carry out the benign principles of revolution. Dire was the excitement produced by this rumour, and every Pumpernickeler was prepared to die in arms for his beloved country. An armed Bürgerwehr was established, to which all flocked, and trade was completely suspended. A few weeks more of this and the whole of Gürkenhof would have been in the Bankruptcy Court.

Fortunately, however, the professors of Germany flung themselves into the breach, and that amiable farce of the Frankfort parliament began. The excitement wore off as rapidly as it had begun, and in a very short time no stranger could have noticed that Pumpernickel had gone through the phases of a revolution. Among the lower classes a more decided taste for beer had been developed, and the innkeepers regretted very sincerely that there was not a revolution a week; but otherwise people were satisfied, and restricted their movements to watching the interminable arguments of the windy parliament.

It was at this interesting period in the history of Pumpernickel that Helen arrived at court, and soon found ample employment in persuading the Princess that there was really no danger. She explained to her as well as she could the scenes of commotion she had herself witnessed in England, and the safeguard of our constitution, which comforted the Princess, though she could not make head or tail of it, and only admired the audacity of a people which dared to object to any measure proposed by royalty. However, the intimacy waxed apace, and Helen was soon all in all with her young pupil, who, I think, began to regard the worthy townsfolk as a little less like wild beasts.

Not long ago Germany magnanimously declared war against the little kingdom of Denmark, in which, I am glad to say, the big bully received a very considerable thrashing. However, this is not any concern of my story, except in so far that the Pumpernickel contingent was ordered out to fight the Danes. Great was the enthusiasm displayed by the populace on this occasion, and, to hear their shouts, you would have fancied that they had a tremendous stake in the liberation of Holstein. For three days the troops were encamped under canvas for the Grand Duke to hold a personal inspection, while dinners were given to the officers, at which interminable toasts were drunk.

Even the court could not escape the popular mania, and in its gratitude at the fortunate escape it had in March, and the occupation given for the restless spirits in fighting the Danes, and letting out their hot blood in furtherance of an idea, it was decided that the Princess Bertha should give the troops a new flag, in which ceremony my Helen acted as standard bearer, and a great excitement was created for the blonde English girl.

The Princess certainly looked very well on this occasion, clothed in white, and wearing a scarf of the national colours. A flush of excitement suffused her usually sallow cheeks with a wholesome tinge of red, while the sun sported in her magnificent locks as they waved to and fro in the toying breeze. I thought her on this occasion one of the prettiest German girls I had ever seen, and joined heartily in the shouts that greeted her; but when she opened her mouth, ye gods, what a disappointment! It was like that fairy princess who dropped toads and other unclean reptiles when she opened her lips. Instead of two rows of milky teeth, which her Teutonic profile promised, you noticed yellow, sadly discoloured teeth—the general curse of German women, by the way, owing to their predilection for boiling soup and sweets.

The speech the young Princess held was, of course, intensely ridiculous, and stuffed full of allusions to the chimerical unity of Germany. These, however, were received with vociferous shouts, and at the conclusion, when she stated that the troops would have a ration of beer issued to them at her expense in honour of the festival, it seemed as if the sky was tumbling in. Still it was very picturesque to see the caps raised on the tops of the bayonets and swaying in the air, while young Von Eckstein blushingly received the

colours from the fair hands of the Princess, and every one present joined in a shout to defend them from the enemy at any risk.

Although I have been a somewhat close observer of German revolutions, and have had the misfortune to have been mixed up in one pocket affair, I have not yet been able to make up my mind what the people really wanted in 1848. Had the land been occupied by an enemy, or any aggression threatened, I could have understood the unanimous movement which ensued on the proclamation of the French republic; but it was quite the contrary case in Germany. The people were happy and contented, the mode of government was exactly suited for them, taxation was absurdly light, and yet they were not satisfied. The German Michel had been roused from his lethargic sleep, and must do something to evince his watchfulness. It would have been just as absurd to expect any result, had old Frederick Rothbart wakened from his sleep at Kyffhausen, and pulled off with a start a huge portion of that russet beard which is supposed to have grown through the table. One thing was just as probable as the other.

The failure of the Frankfort parliament was the result of two very simple elements working antagonistically, while apparently most in harmony: the professors were before their age, the people behind it. At the same time the rulers were banded together more strongly than ever in the defence of their mutual interests, and if they seemed to recoil it was only *pour mieux sauter* when the chance was offered them. Still it was pitiable to see the blood shed at Vienna and Berlin for no earthly object, and the return of Germany to those principles which were inaugurated by the Congress of Vienna has proved that the nation was not ripe for a change.

And this change will never take place. The men who ere fitted to cope with despots have left their country in disgust, and have wandered to America, where they have had license presented to them under the holy garb of Liberty. The consequences of 1848 may now be seen in Hanover and Hesse Cassel, where an autocratic government has trampled the last trace of freedom under foot, and the people are tranquil under the points of bayonets, and before the gaping mouths of twelve-pounders. But I fancy these ideas are not adapted for a novel. I only hope my readers will excuse them as my notions on a subject which is still involved in considerable mystery.

The troops quitted Gürkenhof for the seat of war, more or less in a state of beer, I am afraid, from the copious libations they had poured out with the citizens, and the residenz soon reverted to its pristine somnolency. But to Helen the *Fahnen Weihe* proved a source of much annoyance, for the Grand Duke took it into his transparent head that my heroine was a remarkably pretty girl, and felt angry with himself that he had not discovered it sooner. He had nothing on hand just at present, having grown tired of his last favourite, the Amalie, and was prepared to open negotiations for a successor. With these views he showed Helen the light of his countenance, and paid very frequent and lengthened visits to the Princess Bertha's suite of apartments.

At first the Grand Duke confined his attention to compliment, and that was endurable; but after awhile he began to grow very demonstrative, which Helen did not at all like, and gave her distinctly to understand that it only depended on herself to assume the place vacant *vice* the Amalie, who was superseded. This was the most difficult position in which Helen had been yet placed, for it is extremely awkward to have to refuse the requests of royalty, and morality stands but a poor chance against the *sic volo, sic jubeo* of an autocrat, even if he be only of pocket size like the Grand Duke.

It was hopeless, too, for Helen to appeal to the Princess; for that young lady, though good-hearted and kind, had very queer notions about morality, which grieved Helen, I fancy, even more than the persecutions of the old gentleman. The Princess was perfectly well aware that there were certain things she must do, others she must avoid; but no principle of religion actuated either course of action. Things which a princess could not do without scandal were permissible to a bourgeoisie, and *vice versa*. She had a notion, not peculiar to royalty alone, I am afraid, that the great sin of any action consisted in detection, and that, so long as the proper convenances were observed, all went well. Hence, when Helen gently hinted at the impropriety of the Grand Duke paying such lengthened visits to them during the hours devoted to study, she merely laughed, and said her papa was growing very affectionate in his old age, and that, if Helen played her cards well, much ultimate profit would accrue to her. She had not the slightest notion that Helen regarded the Grand Ducal attentions in any other light than an honour, and I cannot see how she can be blamed, when we

remember there was not a lady at court who would not have leaped to exchange places and opportunities with Helen.

At present fortune smiled most affably on the Grand Duke. On all sides he had scattered his enemies and made them fall. All the Hotspurs of Pumpernickel had volunteered into the free corps which had been formed to liberate Schleswig Holstein, and the army of spies, which had cost the treasury a heavy sum, was disbanded. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that he felt inclined to let a girl conquer him, and he pressed the siege of the fair Helen, regardless of the commotion which her *enlèvement* might produce. After repeated protestations to the Princess, and hints that she would be compelled to leave Gürkenhof, Helen induced her pupil to interfere. Of course she could not make her understand that English girls were averse from propositions, however exalted the position of the proposer might be, if there were a tinge of dishonour about them; so Helen was thankful to find that the Princess was willing to take her part, and did not stop to inquire into the motives that impelled her to action. But the remedy was only transient, and at last, when Helen began to complain again, the Princess, wearied of her importunities, said,—

“Well, Helen, I think the remedy’s in your own hands if you like to employ it. Go and give the Countess of Tulpennhain a hint of your persecution, as you choose to call it, and I daresay she will keep papa in order for the future.”

The alternative was very painful, for the character the Countess bore had urged Helen to avoid all intercourse with her, but there was nothing else to be done; so my heroine took her heart in both hands, and determined to visit the lady and see what could be done. The next day, then, after a very unpleasant scene with the Grand Duke, who even pursued her into her private apartments under the influence of champagne and the news that the Pumpernickel volunteers had been cut off to a man, she went to the Rosenberg, the Countess’s palace, and sent in her name, with a request that she might be allowed to speak with her ladyship in private.

On entering the salon Helen found the Countess reclining lazily in a fauteuil, and laughing heartily at some anecdotes the Baron von Strudelwitz was telling her. She indulged in a bold stare at Helen, after the fashion of great people, and, saying she would attend to her presently, went on with her conversation.

"So the Amalie is about to leave us, Baron?"

"Yes; she says she has played double or quits with Sir Dashwood, and won the game; so she intends to retire from the stage, after taking a benefit at every German theatre which will lend her its assistance."

"Poor Sir Dashwood! It was a bitter blow for his pride. I felt very sorry for him; but, my dear Baron, one woman is enough to conquer any man. When two combine, especially such two as the Durlacher and Amalie, the result is certain. But Prince Hugo played his cards well. Only to think that we none of us knew on what terms he stood with the Durlacher, and that it was through him she came here."

"And that Amalie should detect a secret," the Baron added, "which gave her such a magnificent opportunity to be revenged on his Excellency! and all the while she pretended to hate the Durlacher, and threatened to poison her. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still I cannot understand how Sir Dashwood allowed himself to be deceived."

"Oh! it was his iniquitous pride as usual. He had boasted that the Durlacher should be his, and, when he found he could not keep his word otherwise, he offered to marry her, which, you may naturally suppose, she gladly accepted."

"But it was too bad of Amalie to afficher the sad affair in the way she did. To let all Gürkenhof know that the Durlacher was so intimately acquainted with Prince Hugo was scandalous. The Grand Duke was very angry at the insult offered his Excellency, and, indeed, wished to send Prince Hugo into honourable exile for not coming forward and preventing the scheme; but Sir Dashwood thought there had been sufficient notoriety, and begged him to hush the matter up. And now he'll have a child soon: if it prove a boy it will materially injure that nephew of his, a very fine young man, who really was the least awkward Englishman I have seen."

[My readers can imagine how Helen lifted up her ears at this remark; but listeners hear no good of themselves is an old story.]

"Ha, what a fool he was not to marry Miss Flora, but run off to Paris after some low English girl! We all thought it would be a match, for he seemed to love Miss Delancy, when, poof, he was gone without a word. Strange people the English!"

"Well, Baron, I must not keep you longer; this young person wishes to speak to me."

The Baron, therefore, applied his lips gallantly to the Countess's plump hand, and, after a lengthened stare at Helen, quitted the room. No sooner was he gone than Helen with great hesitation informed the Countess of the reason of her visit. That lady seemed much struck with the story, and could hardly credit but that Helen had some motive in the background, for she could not imagine any woman would throw such a chance away. A careful perusal of Helen's blushing, honest face satisfied her, however, of the innocence of her motives, and she speedily relaxed.

"My dear child, you have done me a great service," the Countess said, drawing Helen toward her, and kissing her on the forehead; "and, believe me, I will not prove ungrateful. I will protect you from any further annoyance, and to-morrow will take my husband on a progress through the country, and keep him away till he has forgotten you, though I am afraid that will be a difficult task——"

"His Excellency the English Ambassador," a gorgeous footman interrupted the lady by announcing.

"Hah, Sir Dashwood, you are come in season to be witness to an instance of unexampled virtue. Your fair countrywoman, Miss Mowbray, has just been complaining to me that my *volage* of a duke has been honouring her with his attentions, which she has the bad taste not to appreciate. Tell me, how shall I reward her? But stay, you other English will accept no reward for doing your duty simply, *hein?*"

Sir Amyas looked fixedly on Helen, who regarded him with equal interest as the uncle of her Charles; then he sighed heavily, and muttering, "Not like her mother," sank moodily into a chair. Still he watched Helen closely, and even drew her into conversation, eagerly devouring every word that fell from her lips.

Sir Amyas had become the ghost of his former self; his head was bowed, and he could not endure the notion that the finger of scorn was pointed at him. Lady Dashwood resided in his palace, but in separate apartments, and he treated her with the greatest politeness, though no persuasion would induce him to see her. His pride had suffered a fearful blow, and the consciousness that his punishment was too well merited gnawed at his vitals, and rendered him truly an object of pity.

From this time forth Sir Amyas displayed a great desire

for Helen's company, and, though the court ladies sneered openly, and expressed their opinion that Sir Amyas was striving to console himself for the defection of his wife, Helen gladly welcomed him, in the hope that his growing fondness for her might eventually induce him to rescind his judgment about her dear Charles.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

I LEFT Mr. Charles Dashwood revolving in his mind the various advantageous offers held out to young men by benevolent capitalists through the columns of *Bell's Life*. Imagine him, then, fully stocked with addresses, and settled in a second floor of Jermyn Street, prepared to solicit interviews from some of the individuals on whom his power to procure money apparently depended. He was as far as ever from any decision as to the profession he should select, so the attraction which money so easily to be procured possessed for him entirely drove from his mind any apprehension of that mauvais quart d'heure when we have to appreciate the truth of the old adage,—

“When house and land and fortune's spent,
Then learning is most excellent.”

My hero, as may be supposed, had not to wait long until he received answers to his applications. In fact, he was rather troubled by an embarrass of benefactors, who all desired to offer him their services. Jermyn Street was invaded on that morning by an army of touts, who certainly did not realise the general idea entertained of capitalists or, at any rate, they had attained that exalted position by spurning their tailors. They were generally a seedy and woe-begone lot, looking much as if they had seen better days, and even those who had any pretensions to the attire which is flatteringly supposed to make the gent of the present day bore evident traces of Moses. They were however, all unanimous in their story—there would not be the slightest difficulty in Mr. Dashwood obtaining money on his reversion; and that young gentleman at length decided on intrusting the matter to an attorney among the

number, by which he would probably save legal expenses, or at least hoped so.

Weeks rolled on, however, and still the business was not settled, and Mr. Dashwood at length made up his mind that he would not return to Oxford, for the fall from the silk gown was too much for his pride. A twinge now and then affected him when he thought of his bills; but, of course, they would be paid out of the proceeds of the reversion, or, if not, they were so exorbitant that the fellows could afford to wait. At length, however, Mr. Dashwood's purse began to run low, and, being naturally prone to the enjoyment of London amusements, he could not endure the idea of secluding himself in his apartments, until the money was procured for him. Hence he determined on looking up his legal friend, and seeing what had prevented his advancing the money.

It was not very easy, however, to carry out this design, for, on going to the address given him by Mr. Sharpe, he found it was a low public-house in the vicinity of the Insolvent Court. For awhile all his inquiries were answered by a stolid "He only comes here for his letters, and we don't know where he lives;" but, having at last impressed the landlord with the idea that he had called on legal business, and, moreover, not looking like a bailiff, Charles was directed to a neighbouring street, where Mr. Sharpe's office was.

A battered brass plate alone indicated that an attorney resided in the mansion, otherwise it seemed given up to dirty children and still dirtier mothers. A strong smell of gin assailed the intruder, mixed with red herrings and fried fish, and Mr. Dashwood certainly thought it a strange abode for a capitalist and gentleman by act of parliament. However, he went up to the first floor, and found Mr. Sharpe actively engaged in smoking a short pipe and making out a bill of costs, both of which seemed to afford him equal satisfaction.

On Charles's entrance Mr. Sharpe jumped up with as near an approach to a blush as ever suffused that gentleman's tawny cheek, and sedulously wiped a chair with his pocket-handkerchief. He then tried to smuggle away a suspicious-looking bottle which stood on the mantel-piece, but, being unsuccessful, hinted it was ink, and prepared to open the conference.

"I was going to write to you to-day, Mr. Dashwood," he commenced. "I am happy to say I have procured you the money, and was about to make an appointment with

you. Money happens to be very tight just at present, and there has been some difficulty in the way. However, the Cormorant Insurance Office is prepared to advance the money, and you will be able to procure £1000 on your reversion."

"That seems very little, Mr. Sharpe. I understood, too, that you were to advance the money yourself when I entered into negotiations with you."

"O yes! but you see my money is all locked up just at present, and I think you will be satisfied with the Cormorant. They will treat you fairly enough; you will only have to pay seven per cent., and need not insure your life."

"Well, I do not care where the money comes from so long as I have it; but I cannot wait any longer, and must have it soon."

"Oh, dear me! you needn't feel at all alarmed; if you will meet me to-morrow we can settle the matter immediately. But there is no difficulty in procuring you some money at once if you like. If you will accept a bill at three months I can get it discounted for you cheap."

"Well, I hardly think that is necessary, as you say the business with the Cormorant will be settled so soon. I can wait a fortnight or so."

"Hem, hem!" said the little lawyer. "Well, you see, these matters are not settled so easily; £1000 is so small a sum that the Cormorant won't put itself out of the way. Lord bless you! it was only last week they advanced £70,000 to Lord Methuselah: they're wonderful rich."

And the lawyer involuntarily took off his hat, as if lost in respect at the mere mention of so large a sum. A company which can lend £70,000 at one pull cannot fail being highly respectable.

"Suppose, then, I took advantage of your offer, Mr. Sharpe," Charles said, "how long would it want to get this £100 bill discounted?"

"Oh! not half an hour. If you will come with me I will see if my friend is at home, and, if so, the business can be settled at once. Excuse me while I change my coat."

And the lawyer dived into a small cupboard, in which Charles could catch a glimpse of a very dirty-looking bed. "My clerk sleeps there to take care of the office," Mr. Sharpe said, apologetically; but he seemed evidently at home in the cupboard himself by the clever manner in which he

avoided barking his shins against the bedposts and boxes which cumbered it.

On emerging from the filthy street Charles had more and more reason to feel surprised at the peculiar ways of capitalists, and to exclaim, "Argent, où diable veux-tu te nicher?" for Mr. Sharpe's discounting friend kept a marine store for the amusement of his leisure hours. Through piles of rags, bones, and old iron they forced their way to the inner sanctuary, where Mr. Nathan was introduced in due form to Charles, as a gentleman in the habit of accommodating young men of property or prospects.

The business was speedily introduced, and Mr. Nathan expressed his readiness to discount a bill of three months at the moderate rate of thirty-five per cent., to which Charles like a fool consented. As I said before, he was utterly ignorant of the value of money, having never yet had to work for it, and £35 appeared to him a very trifling amount to throw away: he had often spent as much in one night. The business thus far arranged, Mr. Sharpe and himself drove off in a cab to the nearest police office, where the latter swore to the truth of an affidavit Mr. Sharpe hurriedly drew up, and, in a few moments after, Mr. Dashwood was richer by £65, poorer by the first mortgage on his property. Mr. Sharpe had a few hurried words of conversation with Mr. Nathan, which caused the chinking of some coin, and then he parted from his client, with an agreement to meet him the next morning at the Cormorant.

In a solemn, quiet, and highly respectable West End street was that highly respectable office situated, which took upon itself to alleviate the monetary cares of young men. The very clerks afforded a guarantee of its respectability. It seemed a standing rule that they must be all short-sighted, and all wore, in consequence, gold spectacles—whether supplied by the office I cannot say. The manager, Mr. Aminadab Amos, departed from this rule. He was the very best of fellows, and much given to speaking of lords in an offhand manner, and thereby impressed on his hearers a vast opinion of the office, which was managed by a gentleman hand in glove with the nobility. His turnout was irreproachable. A mail cart, drawn by two dashing greys, was always standing at the door of the office, prepared to carry the great man to interviews with the aristocracy, and, after business hours, enable him to show himself in the ring, and bow condescendingly to his clients. He had a very fine estate in Kent, supposed in the office to have been

the proceeds of some successful mortgage, and altogether he ranked high in that social sphere where gentility is gauged by the power to keep a gig. In this respect Mr. Amos was far superior to the illustrious Mr. Thurtell.

It is a pity that with all these adventitious aids Mr. Amos's personal appearance was so sadly against him. In spite of yourself you could not dispel the idea, on first seeing him, that he had offered you many-bladed knives at the White Horse Cellars during the stage-coach régime. His face was of the true Caucasian type, strongly marked with Christian pimples as proofs of high feeding, while deep pock-marks seemed so many pitfalls for unwary flies. In his manner he was a cross between the Jew pedlar and the prize-fighter, uniting the chicanery of the one with the brutality of the other, and you felt sure that he would be as dangerous an enemy as he could prove an unpleasant friend.

His language was made up of very strong expressions, picked up at second-hand from his aristocratic clients, and his own innate vulgarity, which he succeeded in combining by vowed uncompromising hostility against his b's. In short, he was a low fellow, who could cajole and bully by turns, and hence the very best man the Cormorant could have to manage its intricate and somewhat discreditable transactions.

As Louis XIV liked to say, "L'état, c'est moi," so Mr. Amos would have been quite justified in regarding the company as himself. It is true there was a published board of directors, principally consisting of retired butlers and tradesmen, who intrusted the sole management of the office to Mr. Amos, and rubbed their hands at the division of profits, without caring to ask whence they were derived; but they were thorough dummies, only too glad to see themselves in print with an esquire tacked to their ignoble names. The board represented the shareholders, and altogether the office was a snug little concern, dividing large profits, and ready to lend any quantity of money for a consideration. Such was the company and such the manager with whom it was Charles Dashwood's fate to be linked.

The interview with Mr. Amos, when that dignitary permitted Charles and the lawyer to approach his august presence, after keeping them an hour waiting, was very satisfactory. The money was ready so soon as the requisite deeds could be drawn up, and if Mr. Dashwood would call again in a week, why, yes, they would probably have the

papers in readiness. In the meantime, if the office required his presence, they would communicate with him through Mr. Sharpe, and the conference was over. Charles quitted the office, I trust, with an increased reverence for money; and, indeed, he ought to have been willing to fall down and worship before Mammon, when he saw the sacred *nimbus* with which it surrounded such men as Mr. Amiaudab Amos. Mr. Sharpe thence proceeded to Doctors' Commons to procure a copy of Sir Amyas's will; while Charles, feeling somewhat elated by the near termination of his troublesome business, walked up and down Regent Street, and selected from the shop windows various articles he intended to purchase, as absolutely necessary for his station in society.

While lounging about, and half undecided whether he should not turn into Verey's and indulge in lunch, Charles suddenly heard himself hailed. He looked round and could only see a huge, high-stepping horse, which seemed amiably preparing to plant its forepaws on his shoulders. On moving a little on one side he, however, recognised the Marquis, who bade him jump in, for he had lots to talk to him about and no time to waste.

"Only think, Charley, I have just been offered the embassy to Timbuktu—a splendid appointment—and have a great mind to accept it. But, hang it! I can't get Susan to say yes or no—whether she'll have me, I mean—and I am quite determined not to go without her. Oh, dear me! what shall I do? Won't you take pity on an unfortunate Marquis, who can't induce his young woman to say yes at once?"

"My dear Lancing, I told you before that it's an awkward matter for me to interfere in—between the tree and the bark—you know the French proverb. But I can't think Susan can be blind to your transcendent merits, and when she knows you are making up your mind to leave England, she may say yes, if you press her."

"Ah! you don't know, Charley, what trouble I have had with her. She had only to say the word, and we should have been married a month ago. It's doosid hard on a young man with ten thousand a year that he can't marry when he pleases; but I'm hanged if I don't take the embassy, and if she won't have me then, I'll go away and try to forget her; so now I'll be off to Mastodon Square, and tempt my luck for the last time. I won't ask you to come with me; but mind and dine with me to-night at Limmer's. Ta-ta."

And the Marquis touched up the high-spirited horse, and swung round a corner in a style that threatened immediate demolition to a lamp-post.

It was quite correct; the Marquis of Lanceing had been offered the important embassy to Timbuktu. Some very valuable trade questions were at stake, which could only be regulated by the presence of an English envoy; and, of course, the Marquis, as a born legislator, was the right man for the right place. It is true he could just manage to write a letter in a great schoolboy hand, with sufficient grammatical faults to pluck him in any competitive examination; but he would have plenty of persons to attend to his spelling, and the fine old English traditions would be maintained in their pristine splendour. I am glad to say that no bitterness surged up from the central fount of his pleasure. Susan did not prove hard-hearted; in fact, she would not have been a woman if she had resisted the combined influences of a title and an embassy, and the *Morning Post* soon devoted a paragraph to the announcement of an approaching marriage in high life.

It might be assumed that Charles, in the consciousness of this new connection, might have rested very safely on his oars, and trusted to his new brother-in-law to provide for him. I am sorry to say, however, that my hero was a strange medley of bad and good; and, while guilty of grave faults, he had sufficient pride not to take advantage of adventitious circumstances to promote his own interests. As soon as his sister became a marchioness he felt that there ought to be a great gulf fixed between her and poor relations, in order that her husband might never have a chance to reproach her with having married her family as well as herself. Hence he was very glad that they were to leave England at once, and by the time they returned his own fate would be decided. Either he would have secured a position in which Susan need not blush to recognise him, or he would have disappeared from the stage altogether. I am inclined to think the latter the more likely issue.

The business at the insurance office was soon arranged, and within three weeks Mr. Charles Dashwood was introduced by the polite Mr. Amos to an elderly lady, who was prepared to lend him £1000 for an annuity of £70 *per annum*, to be paid her quarterly. Mr. Sharpe expressed his satisfaction with the deeds drawn up by the office, stating that they were all in order, and nothing remained to do but sign, seal, and deliver. But I am wrong there; a

trifle to pay still remained in the shape of £90 to the highly respectable office for deeds, &c. This made a very respectable hole in the £1000, and to this must be added £80 to Mr. Sharpe, £30 being for costs between attorney and client, and £50 being five per cent. commission for procuring the money. Add to this the £100 bill to take up, and Charley was left in the possession of the magnificent sum of £730 to represent a mortgage of £1000 and the interest thereupon. I wonder whether my friend is beginning yet to appreciate the true value of money? I am afraid not by the way in which he set about spending the surplus.

In the first place Charles was fool enough to lay out nearly £200 in a set of topazes, as a wedding present for his sister, whose husband could have given her twenty such sets without inconveniencing himself; but it appears the rule in polite society that, when a daughter marries into a high position, her family must distress themselves for a long while by the disproportionate presents they make her as a reward for her good conduct. Then there came the acquisition of those expensive nicknacks which Charley thought indispensable for his comfort, and the purchase of the furniture of a very snug set of bachelor chambers in Piccadilly; so I do not feel surprised that the inexhaustible sum soon dwindled down to £250, which, however, Charles thought ample to carry on the war with till that something turned up on which he built.

However, he had the intense gratification of being present at St. George's when the charming Susan was converted into the still more charming marchioness (for money and position add a thousand new charms to the loveliest girl), and the satisfaction of proposing the bridegroom's health at the breakfast in a neat and appropriate speech. He also was most politely received by several mothers of families, who thought him an excellent *parti* as brother-in-law to a marquis, and altogether my young friend was in the seventh heaven. He had not the least doubt of success, and was rather pleased that the Marquis was to start so soon on his embassy, as it would give him the opportunity of carving out independence for himself.

In the meanwhile I very much regret to say that he descended into the character of a "man about town," and the worst phase of his existence commenced. If Charles eventually emerge from the dangers which beset him, he stands a good prospect of recovering lost ground; but the

ordeal he will pass through is very scorching, and he runs a risk of being utterly consumed, instead of being purified by the fire.

I had at first thought it would be advisable to pass over this stormy period in silence, and leave my readers to guess for themselves what befell my hero; but, on the other hand, the lesson may be a useful one, for I am heart-sick at the thought that Charles Dashwood's follies are no creation, but are exhibited daily around us. If you desire to know in what they terminate, search the annals of the Insolvent Court as published in the *Times*, and you will find countless instances of young men, possessed of bright prospects, who may date their ruin from their first introduction to such highly respectable offices as the *Corporant*.

CHAPTER XXII.

NOCTES LONDINENSES.

How many a worthy lady really believes the story told her by her husband, and fancies that he has been detained at the "House" till long past canonical hours, when, in all probability, he has been visiting the Haymarket, and drinking every sort of villainous compound at night-houses. It is very easy for elderly ladies to rail about the vices of Paris, and regard that amusing city as an earthly pandemonium; but were Exeter Hall to know one half of the vice that goes on in London between the hours of 9 P.M. and 8 A.M. it would hold up its hands in pious horror, or, at any rate, take some steps to remove the beam from its own eye before it cavilled at its neighbour's wickedness.

England is essentially the home of hypocrisy. We are brought from our youth up to fear what Mrs. Grundy will say, and, though we are not one whit behind our continental neighbours in vice, we conceal it so closely that superficial observers believe in the whiteness of the sepulchre. This is seen in a thousand instances. In France a man goes on Sunday to enjoy the fresh air, and for that Exeter Hall says he is damned, but declines to say what will be the final stage of our artisans who go to church in the morning, in obedience to prescription and to keep their customers,

while they get very drunk at home in the afternoon. Our rule of faith may be summed up as *de non apparentibus et de non existentibus eadem est ratio*, that is to say, so long as a man gets drunk without showing it, he is one of the steadiest men going. By this system we certainly grow an admirable crop of hypocrisy, but whether the nation will eventually benefit by it remains to be seen.

I do not wish to say one word against religion. Far be it from me to try and assail a system which has been found to work so well for the maintenance of order; but I do say that mere going to church should not be regarded as plenary absolution for sins, nor that I should be looked upon as an outer heathen if I prefer to read my Bible at home, instead of enduring for two hours the nasal twang of Mr. M'Phungus.

It is the same in everything. Mr. Jones will take his wife to the opera, and when it is over hand her to her carriage, while he goes to amuse himself with the brilliant, though somewhat improper, characters who throng the Hay-market at night. Then, polluted by the contact, he goes home, and passes off to the world as a model husband. It is rather hard on the wife, though, for her conversation cannot be expected to have that piquancy to which Mr. Jones has grown accustomed by his night researches, and he begins to find home slow. His club is the scapegoat for repeated absences, and at length, one fine day, he appears in the *Gazette*. The unhappy wife has to undergo all the misery of the position, to which the husband's brutality is too often superadded, and dies of a broken heart, while Mr. Jones passes universally for a good man and a Christian; for did he not go to church regularly on Sundays, and give tithes of all he possessed — at his creditors' expense?

If Charles Dashwood found any time to think during his short existence as a man about town, this anomaly would have struck him; and he would not probably have been on such friendly terms with Fitzspavin, when he met him at the various night-houses, if he had remembered that gentleman's new-married wife was pining at home neglected and outraged. I do not say that Fitzspavin had married her from love; I do not think he was ever capable of so exalted and ennobling a feeling, although Flora possessed a degree of beauty for which some men would have gone mad; but Fitzspavin's heart was only just large enough for one, that one being himself, and he soon grew tired of being *aux*

petits soins with his wife. Flora, like a loving fool as she was, had spurned the judicious advice of her mother to have her fortune settled on herself. She trusted to the generosity of the man who had vowed to protect her, and was now reaping the consequences. Three months' wedded life had amply satisfied the Honourable Captain, and he reverted to that company in which he felt most at home, and for which every opportunity was afforded him in the purlieus of the West End.

Charley, light-minded and careless, felt a certain degree of pride in being taken up by such a knowing gentleman as Fitzspavin, and was only too willing to accompany him to those haunts which served to destroy his health and precipitate his ruin. No more constant visitor at the Casino could be found than Charley. Then came heavy, indigestible suppers at the Coal Hole or the Cider Cellars, and, flushed with wine, he was perfectly careless how he spent the remainder of the night. I have sufficient respect for my readers not to insult them by asking them to follow my hero further. If they must know, let them ask son Clarence or brother 'Gus to account for his pallor and weariness when he comes down to breakfast in a well-regulated house, and makes wild allusions to bitter beer.

I suppose there must be some peculiar fascination which causes our young men to go through the same dull round of miscalled pleasure every night in succession. I have tried to realise any attraction it possessed for myself at the period when I sowed my wild oats, but I cannot recall any. I do not think the offer of many thousands would now tempt me to go through a fresh course of what is cynically called "seeing life," meaning more correctly, meeting death half way. There must be some intense charm about London during the small hours, and spending one's nights in chaffing policemen and drinking the most adulterated of beer; but I candidly confess that I have grown beyond this, and a very misty recollection of the enjoyment it produced pervades me; but I have a very distinct reminiscence of the headaches from which I suffered each morning, and the tremendous determinations I used to make "to go and sin no more, lest a worse thing befell me." Taken altogether I think our young men will agree with me that *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*. A ruined constitution is but poorly compensated by a perfect knowledge of the evil with which our great city pullulates.

Among other intellectual amusements to which Charles

devoted himself was billiards, a game which he had greatly admired at Oxford, and to which he now paid so much attention that he soon became a very good player. Unfortunately, the game of billiards possesses this peculiarity—that, however good a player you may be, you are sure to come across some one who plays better than yourself, through coolness and judgment at any rate. There are men in London who make their livelihood, and that a very comfortable one, by the money they nightly pick up at pool; and yet, to see them play, you fancy them not nearly so good players as yourself. If you wish to convince yourself of your mistake try them, that's all; but I would not advise you to exceed a half-crown bet. And I am alluding to fair players here, who would scorn to take the slightest advantage of you beyond what was strictly justifiable by the rules; then think how you must fare if you fall into the hands of such gentry as rooked Lord Hotspur out of £70,000. He was a good player, and they knew it; so, to make assurance doubly sure, they shaved his ball, and prevented it running true, by which operation they netted the above nice little sum, while Lord Hotspur put out his estates to nurse, and wisely left off playing billiards for money.

Another fancy to which Charles gave free scope was a dangerous friendship with actors, who, though very good fellows in their way, and the majority gentlemen, are not exactly the best company for a young man who has his way to make in the world. The result of this acquaintance was, of course, to make Charley known to a swarm of dramatic authors, who are always wont to kotoo actors of renown, as a means, I presume, of displaying their independence and raising the dignity of literary men. However, they had no other method of recommending their adaptations, and perhaps I must not blame them, for I do not see that the other branch of literature to which I have the honour to belong is one whit the better.

One night, or rather, one morning, Charles had turned into a night-house in the Haymarket, being somewhat thirsty, when he noticed an elderly man, who had evidently "seen better days," in a considerable state of brandy and water, and being hustled by two or three prize-fighting cads. Charles, with the generosity of youth, took the old man's part, and gallantly fought his way out of the house with his almost unconscious companion, followed by a yell from the baffled ruffians. Charles, fearing to leave the old man to be picked

up by some of the later visitors of the Haymarket, and yet not knowing what to do with him, hit on the next best scheme. He led him into another public-house, and deluged him with soda water until he was able to explain where he lived, or where he wished to go to.

"O yes! I'm all right," the gentleman said with rather an insane laugh; "and who the devil are you? Some infernal counter-jumper or other, I suppose—robbed the till, and out spending the money. Very pretty company for a gentleman! Holloa! where am I?"

Charley could not be angry with an old man out of whose mouth the drink so evidently spoke; so he kept his temper admirably, and merely said that he had tried to save him from being robbed, and, having succeeded, would now leave him.

But the old gentleman would not consent to this. He clutched at his arm, and said solemnly,—

"One word, young man. Are you a gentleman? If so, give me your hand, and I thank you for a fine fellow; if not, you can go to the devil."

Charles was highly amused by his original old friend's remark, and owned that he was a gentleman by birth, though he insinuated, with gentle sarcasm, that the fact was not exactly compatible with his presence in a pothouse. The old gentleman winced slightly, and then said, "Hang me, you're a good fellow. Here, give me your arm, and see me into a cab."

And, as Charles put him safely under the care of cabby, the old gentleman whispered to him, "Young man, henceforth Waffles is your friend. Whenever you come to Paris don't forget to ask my address at Galignani's. I'll give you some of the finest brandy to be got anywhere."

He then gave some dark intimation to the cabman, evidently desirous to retain the mystery as to his abiding place, and the cab rolled away.

"Lord bless you, sir," said an adjacent policeman, "you needn't feel afraid about him; he's always on about this time, and we lock him up for safety. He's a good old fellow, though, if it wasn't for the drink."

But Charley was lost in thought. The name of Waffles was familiar as a household word to him. He had been the delight of our fathers, as one of the cleverest, wildest young fellows, who sang bacchanalian songs at Offley's, *Consule Plancio*, and thought such jolly times would last for ever. One of the most popular playwrights of his day, and author

of novels which ran through any quantity of editions, Waffles had made money by coat pocketsful. Whenever his purse ran empty he had only to go to a publisher and get an advance; for, though he was the idlest of men, he was always ready to keep his promise, and worked like a galley-slave when he fancied his honour was assailed by his delay. So things went on gloriously, there could be no end to the income, and, if Waffles' friends recommended saving to him, he laughed at the notion, and washed down the unpalatable suggestion with copious draughts of brandy and water.

But it was too good to last; the time came when Waffles' right hand forgot its cunning, and his brain, sapped by incessant drinking, was unable to cope with the younger men who had invaded the theatre of his triumphs. Perhaps, too, public taste had changed: the populace no longer admired coarse jests about matters which they had been brought up to reverence. At any rate, Waffles found the guineas coming in very slowly. For a time he earned a precarious income by lending his name to weak books, but this failed, and he was forced to look the matter sternly in the face, and work for that livelihood which he had hitherto gained so easily. But he discovered that writing from compulsion was a very different thing from writing when in the vein, and the mortification at finding that his jests failed him when most required produced a dangerous illness which confined him to his bed.

Intense was the sympathy raised by the news of Waffles' illness, for he was one of the last links connecting present literature with the past, and a subscription was soon raised to relieve him from immediate necessity. Then the Literary Fund stepped in with that promptitude which it always displays in cases of real distress, and many influential persons discussed what should be done for Waffles. At length a vacancy at the Charter-house was offered him, and Waffles, still very shaky, went down in a cab to inspect the premises, and see whether they were fit for a gentleman; but when he heard that the brothers were expected to dine at four o'clock he very distinctly negatived the proposition, and went back to dine with the kind friend who had accompanied him, at whose house he got lamentably drunk, and, I believe, insisted on kissing the maid-servant.

At last Waffles was got rid of, after he had wearied every friend, by a pension of £80 a year from government, and lives in Paris, under the protection of an old woman who had been his landlady in richer times, and

followed his fortunes with a zeal worthy of a better cause. If you go to call on Waffles now, he will tell you most improper stories, at which he laughs heartily, and ends by borrowing a crown of you, which, as soon as you turn your back, is converted into brandy. As the last representative of the old school of literature, it is interesting to visit him once, and a crown is not too much to pay for the curiosity. But you must be a gentleman : though Waffles has sunk very low he wont associate with cads. He'll borrow money of them, it is true ; but then he regards that as an honour he pays them, which they should recognise humbly.

I think, though, if the present generation cannot write so well as the past, and literature is tainted by the knowledge of French and German we are obliged to bring into action, there will not be many Waffles to represent us. Literary men are expected in these hard times to behave respectably, or they soon sink in public esteem ; and if the high jinks which were the characteristics of writers in the days when Captain Morris was the exemplar of the gentleman author were to be played now, we should find ourselves compelled to turn to some other branch to insure our livelihood. I do not say that we are stoics ; indeed, we heartily agree with old Martin Luther that

“Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang,
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang.”

Still we have sufficient respect for ourselves to keep our revels discreetly from the public ken, and are possibly not a bit worse than the most uncompromising teetotaler.

The only thing that surprises me in this part of Charles Dashwood's naughty career is, that he did not take to gambling. Not that he did not visit all the hells of London, under the guidance of his friend Fitzspavin ; but he could not lower himself to stake money at the same table with the utter scoundrels whom he saw collected there. The very scum of the continent seemed congregated in these lurking places of villainy, and though he visited them as a curious psychological study, no persuasions would induce him to play. But, by a strange contradiction, he felt not the slightest disinclination to speculate on the turf, and, indeed, under Fitzspavin's guidance, was becoming quite an adept in estimating the odds. He had begun to keep a very pretty little pocket-book, in which he entered his bets, and was not particular whether he speculated on a horse-race, foot-race, or even a prize-fight.

The noble art of self-defence had, for a time, a valuable patron in Charley, and he much astonished the professors by the valuable use he could make of his fists. In fact, Charley soon found that the pugilists of merry England, who are popularly supposed to defend our nation from the use of the knife by the glorious example they furnish, were an arrant set of impostors. The fights which they got up for fabulous sums were almost always "crosses :" no money changed hands except that paid by the victims, while a fine harvest of watches and chains was reaped on the field, the profits of which the professors generally shared with the swell mob. It was a grand system of mutual interest, in which the swells who were fools enough to attend represented the floating capital. The fighting men themselves were a bloated set of burly ruffians, who while in the grub state had been strong batters, and possibly honest ; but, so soon as they entered the magic circle, good living and the indulgence of every sensual appetite pulled them down, and the severest course of training could not restore them their vigour ; so Charley, after finding a part of the battle-money in two or three fights, grew heartily disgusted with the ring and its professors, and turned his attention to boat-racing.

Here he found just the same system at work. The betting men regarded the oarsmen as mere machines, which they bought and sold at their good pleasure, and the same bad result was the rule. No man would be fool enough to pull fairly and try to win, if he could gain double the money by "chucking" the race ; and, with dearly purchased experience, Charley made up his mind to devote his attention exclusively to horse-racing, for, at any rate, the animals were honest, and would do their best to win.

By this time Charley had gained a considerable stock of experience, and, by the time he has got well of the turf mania, he will be perfectly justified in assuming the honorary title of a "man about town." What profits that will bring him in is a moot point. Fortunately a very unexpected incident was about to occur, which would furnish him an opportunity, at any rate, of regaining his health, if it does not check him in his downward career.

Charley had made a match at billiards with a quiet elderly gentleman, who was an *habitué* of the rooms where he generally played, and who was very proud of his proficiency. The match was merely meant in jest, and was only for a "fiver,"

but the rooms were crowded on the occasion, and a good deal of speculation seemed afloat. Charley good-humouredly accepted some small bets which were offered, and the play commenced. They had agreed to play the best out of nine, and Charley was certainly in good play, for he won the first game in a canter. The second had the same result, and champagne was produced. The third game was a closer match, and Charley, rather annoyed at the check he had met in his hitherto triumphant career, snapped at the bets which were offered, and stood in a fair way of losing £200.

The game went on with alternating success, Charley drinking wildly and playing very badly, while the old gentleman was cautious as ever, and put the balls into the pocket with that slow, certain stroke which drives young men to despair. They stood at four all, and the decisive game commenced. Charley grew very savage, and played recklessly. Of course fortune favoured him, and he soon ran up to forty-seven, his opponent being at thirty-eight, and the betting very shy.

The red ball was over the middle pocket, and Charley, in his certainty of winning, shouted, "A thousand pounds to one that I win the game this stroke!"

"Done!" said his opponent, "it is a bet."

The shock sobered Charles at once, and he felt that he had been a fool. A tremor came over him, and he could hardly hold his cue. At length he was just about playing, when a stranger barked him by saying,—

"Mr. Charles Dashwood, I believe?"

"Yes; what do you want? Don't bother me now."

"All right, Jim," the stranger went on in a very ginny voice; "this *is* the gentleman. Glad to see you, Mr. Dashwood; you can't think what a precious trouble I have had to find you. I want to say something particular to you in private."

"You'd better go, Charley," said Fitzspavin, who had been examining the stranger closely.

Charles stepped angrily to the door, when the stranger produced a piece of stamped paper and said, "I arrest you, Mr. Dashwood, at the suit of Mr. Amos, for £1027."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"It's a *capias*. Oh! I see you don't understand—it's all right, I tell you. Mr. Amos heard you were going to leave the country, and so he thought 'safe bind, safe find,' would be the best."

"Fitz, my boy, come here," cried Charley in despair; "there's some mistake."

At this appeal Fitzspavin stepped out, and soon found from the bailiff how matters stood. He then added,—

"I'm afraid, Charley, you will have to go with this gentleman, for to-night at least. You can make it all right in the morning. It's a pity too, when you were so near winning the game. Better luck next time!"

Charley, much discomfited, put on his coat and hat, and followed the bailiff to some lodgings which had a fine view of Chancery Lane. Here he spent a very restless night, and bitterly cursed Mr. Amos for defrauding him of the £200 he had so nearly won.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LA DAME BLANCHE : PRENEZ GARDE !

THE war with Denmark, on which the Germans had built such magnificent hopes, was over, and the armistice of Malmö had sunk Germany to a lower degree of degradation than she had ever yet attained. Like an overbearing bully she had tried to coerce her plucky little opponent; but, finding that hard blows necessitated a give and take, and that the punishment could not be all on one side, she had soon given in, and the crowing over the capture of the "Gefion" had degenerated into a very feeble whine. The princes, however, were satisfied. They had carried out the object they desired, for the volunteers had borne all the brunt of the war, by which many ardent young republicans had been sent out of the world. The troops had plundered with the greatest impartiality friend and foe, and as nothing more could be gained, and they somehow got a good thrashing every time they came into collision with the Danes, they were not sorry to hear that they were going home again.

But in Frankfort a bitter feeling was aroused, which resulted in the deaths of Lichnovsky and Auerswald, and the arrival of the troops to put down the republicans and coerce the parliament, for the regents thought it was time for the farce to come to an end. The stenographic reports daily published had an unfavourable effect on the temper

of the people, and, besides, Germany did not want a parcel of lawyers banded together to talk nonsense; so the parliament received a first warning in the shape of armed interference, and all idea of its inviolability was blown to the winds by the death of poor Robert Blum, its envoy at Vienna. It was certainly a mistake that Windischgrätz should have been selected to quell the insurrection at Vienna. The melancholy death of his wife had rendered him blind to any feeling but revenge, and the hecatomb of victims he piled upon her bier only gratified his own vindictiveness, without restoring the people to its old affections. The consequence is that, if another revolution take place ever in Vienna, the result will be very different.

I candidly confess that the Viennese revolution of 1848 goes beyond my comprehension. That a people notoriously so good tempered should rise *en masse* in behalf of the Hungarians, who despise the Germans, and only know them by the generic name of Suabes, almost surpasses credibility. It is not possible to imagine that the Austrians had any serious complaints to urge against their good old Kaiser Franz'l; for, whatever may be the faults of the Austrian government, it cannot be said but that it is the most paternal on the continent, and the most honest in furthering the welfare of the nation at large. A great deal was said at the time about the intrigues of the Camarilla and the parti prêtre; but my knowledge of the Austrians induces me to believe that, as long as they have their beer and plenty to eat, they are about as likely to rebel as a herd of pigs. Perhaps in this instance, as once before, they were possessed of devils, and they certainly shared the same fate.

However, the Austrian insurrection, from whatever cause it originated, had the one decided result of producing the strictest amity among the regents, and it was found that the very reverse of the *divide et impera* principle must be followed if they wished to secure their thrones. As the first step, the Frankfort parliament must be dissolved, as it only set the people thinking, which was very undesirable, and the war with Denmark must be stopped, in order that the troops might be concentrated at home to be prepared for any eventualities. The rough habits of warfare, and the necessary brutality engendered by bloodshed (some rulers employing sausages and champagne for this laudable purpose), would have driven all the fraternising nonsense out of their minds, and they would be quite prepared to

shoot father or brother if he dared to rise in rebellion against his anointed lord.

The Grand Duke of Pumpernickel felt decidedly uncomfortable. The insurrectionists in Baden had diffused a bad spirit through the whole of southern Germany, and he longed to have his troops back, sadly lamenting the while that he had ever allowed them to go. As the next best measure he recalled all the staff officers, and as many others as could be spared. Among them was the young Von Eckstein, who resumed his duties in the palace. The Grand Duke began to grow easier in his mind, and could now devote his attention to domestic matters.

Among other subjects which demanded his immediate notice was a very flattering offer of marriage made him for the Princess Bertha from a relative of the Russian court. At that time the crafty Muscovite was engaged in carrying out the scheme of forming alliances all through Germany, which bore such excellent fruit in the Crimean war; and, although Pumpernickel was a very small item, it was not to be despised, as the Grand Duke was allied to every regnant house, and counted cousins with half the nobility of the old empire. Hence a prince rejoicing in a name terminating in *off* and some five thousand serfs was proposed for the Princess; and the Grand Duke, on the principle that—

“ ‘T is a very fine thing to be father-in-law
To a very magnificent three-tail’d bashaw,”

was ready to jump out of his royal slippers at the offer, and ran off to impart it to his daughter, on the supposition that she would be equally pleased.

But he found himself very much mistaken. The Princess Bertha, with all due gratitude, declined the offer, and said that she had no wish to change her religion and her name even for a Russian prince. The Grand Duke pressed her; but she was a daughter of his to the back bone as far as obstinacy was concerned, and when he drew up his eyebrows, and reminded her of her duty as a daughter, she stamped her little foot, and reminded him of his duty as a father, which was not to send her to Russia to have half her toes frozen off.

The poor Duke was in despair, for harshness was so utterly unsuited to his character, that he did not know how to force his daughter to do anything which was so evidently for her good. At last he very rudely said that he must find

means to enforce obedience, at which the Princess first pouted, and then said laughingly, "We shall see."

It was quite a novel situation. That a princess should think proper to refuse an eligible offer was really too absurd; but, for all that, the Grand Duke was at his wits' end. At first he thought of consulting Helen on the matter, for she had more power over her pupil than any one else; but then he remembered the insular obstinacy with which she had refused his own magnificent offers, and feared that she might only prove a valuable ally to the enemy. As a last resource he decided on consulting the Countess von Tulpenhain.

Now, this lady had no particular affection for the Princess, for the young person, as she called her in her own mind, did not treat her at all like a mother, and a great deal too much as an interloper. Hence, when she heard the Duke's report, and that his daughter disliked the match, she strongly urged him to force it on her. If no other means served, he must turn the light of his countenance from her, and declare her in a state of disgrace. That would bring her to her senses. The Duke agreed, made another attack on his daughter, in which he was lamentably defeated, and covered his retreat by declaring her in disgrace during his good pleasure.

This may sound very strange to my English readers; but I can assure them it is no joke to be in disgrace at court, even if you are a princess. Much has been written about the Papal interdict hurled against John Lackland, and authors have described in lamentable colours the condition of the country during the period when there could be no marrying or giving in marriage; but that was nothing compared to disgrace at court. The poor Princess was wretched; every one turned away from her except Helen; her nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles met with no response from those who would have previously flown to fulfil her slightest wish. She was as a Pariah among a company of high-caste Brahmins, and soon became very melancholy and desponding. At length she one day said to her faithful Helen,—

"Helen, dear, I am sure you love me. Will you do what I ask of you? It is a very simple thing."

"What is it, treasure mine?" said Helen, heartily glad to see her dear pupil rousing at length from her lethargy.

"Fly with me away from this odious court, where all are hollow-hearted sycophants. See, Helen, we will go to the

Black Forest, and earn our simple food. Oh, it must be so charming in those villages dear Auerbach has described!"

"Silly child, do you think you could earn your living with those delicate hands? Village life is all very charming in romances, but the authors wisely forget to tell us how their heroines have blistered feet and hands, and faces burned so that they laugh cold cream to scorn. Besides, Toni you would find worse as a husband than your odious Russian prince; for, if you didn't milk the cows properly, he would cut a thick stick from the nearest tree, and lay it about your delicate shoulders."

Helen had a strong suspicion that marriage would be the very best thing to drive all the romance out of her pupil's head, and hoped that by assuming the duties of a wife she would learn her responsibilities as a woman; so she was a hearty ally of the Grand Duke in the matrimonial matter, and determined to use all her influence in inducing the Princess to give way. The young lady, however, burst into a fit of tears, and crying, "You, too, are my enemy, and I am left all alone," retired to her bed-chamber, where she spent her time in writing a long crossed letter, which she took an opportunity of sending to its address by putting it in the stove, which was heated outside—a very curious style of letter-box, I admit; but the shifts of love are notorious.

But the court was soon roused from its amazement at the Princess's disgrace by the still more astounding information that the "white lady" had reappeared in the palace. A belated servant had seen her gliding along the main corridor, and had watched her disappearing in the vicinity of Princess Bertha's chamber. The excitement this produced was tremendous, and was soon confirmed by other timid persons, so, before long, no persuasion would induce a courtier to visit the palace apartments and corridors after nightfall, unless in strong detachments and well primed with brandy.

In Great Britain every family which prides itself on its descent has its private ghost, which appears at certain intervals as a sure forerunner of misfortune. Unless the banshee were to appear my lord duke would live to an eternity, which would be a sad annoyance to his eldest son; but, so soon as the spectral visitor has been sighted, he deliberately makes up his mind to die, and generally succeeds. Perhaps superstition has something to do with it—probably malice prepense a good deal more; but you could not insult some great men more than by suggesting a doubt as to the reality of their private ghost. They would rather

die than have any slur cast upon that tradition, which honours their family so much. Generally, I believe, the ghost is traced back to some horrid murder of a woman, perpetrated by a member of the family in the præ-Adamite ages, for which the culprit would now be hanged at the Old Bailey; but, as Horace Walpole tells us, it is a distinguishing mark of high birth to have an ancestor or so hanged, or quite worthy of that fate, for some atrocious crime. I am afraid my Lord Lyttelton's white dove has much to answer for.

In Germany, I believe, the luxury of keeping a ghost is confined to reigning families, and even these suffer from a paucity of imagination, for they all run after a "Dame Blanche," as if they were devoted admirers of Boieldieu's music. The white lady of Berlin is as notorious as the little red man of the Tuileries; and the white lady of Baden has committed some very naughty actions, if the popular traditions are to be credited, in the way of carrying off royal infants, and putting them out to nurse like regal babes in the wood. I remember that the democrat Hecker, who left his country for his country's good, owed a great portion of his renown among the commonalty to a widely spread report that he was own brother to Caspar Hauser, and legitimate heir to the crown. No better scheme for reconciling republicanism and royalty could have been conceived.

Of course, when white ladies were in the fashion, Pumpernickel could not be without one. I do not know that their dame blanche ever did anybody any harm, but she was generally believed to be a very dangerous person, to be carefully avoided when seen. Hence her appearance excited grave apprehensions in court circles, and the Grand Duke, who was naturally superstitious, as his conscience was not of the brightest, began to become a very regular attendant at chapel, and went to bed sober for a whole week. Finding the remedy, however, worse than the disease, as he could not sleep without his accustomed *stimulus*, and was troubled by hypochondria, which, among us lower mortals, would be called the blue devils, he took to the champagne again, and went to chapel twice as often as before, to the considerable annoyance of the chaplain.

Unfortunately he could gain no support from the Countess, for she was as great a coward as himself, and uttered an immeuse quantity of *mon Dieus* when she heard of the spectral visitant. At last the Duke, thinking that in a

multitude of councillors there must be safety, summoned Sir Amyas Dashwood to a conference. That gentleman listened very attentively, raised his shoulders imperceptibly on hearing that the nocturnal visitant disappeared near the Princess's apartments, and then said,—

"I would recommend your Royal Highness to consult Miss Mowbray on the subject. She is a sensible, well-meaning girl, and if there be any mystery concealed she will find it out. I would offer my own services, but I am very unwell. Still I think your Royal Highness will be safe in that young lady's hands, and you can trust her implicitly."

The Grand Duke was greatly relieved by this advice, and returned to the palace to put it in practice; so he summoned Helen to his presence, and spoke most affectionately to her.

"My dear young lady," he said, "you must be aware that the palace is visited each night by the white lady, and I am very anxious to discover whether there is any mystery connected with her, as Sir Dashwood seems to think. He advised me to apply to you, as a lady possessed of great discretion; and I know," he added with a very sickly smile, "that you other English fear nothing."

"I am quite ready to obey your Royal Highness's instructions," said Helen spiritedly. "Englishwomen are not wont to be terrified by things, merely because they pass their comprehension. I am quite willing to do my best to solve this mystery, if there be one, though I believe that it originates with some servant's vague terrors, and if I discover anything I will report it to your Royal Highness."

"Brave girl!" said the Duke, with great enthusiasm, "I will order some of the servants to be within call.

"Your Royal Highness must pardon me. If there be any truth in this vision there may be some secret connected with it, which should not be made known to the public. If you will permit me I will make my own arrangements, and do not fear the result."

"And when will you proceed to action?" said the Grand Duke.

"This very evening. The preparations I will make are very simple, and I shall be ready in half an hour."

It must be confessed that Helen, on consideration, rather disliked the task she had proposed to herself, for, though constitutionally brave, she did not like facing a ghost, sup-

posing it really was one. However, she laughed off her fears, really believing that some drunken servant had been deceived by the moon's rays falling on the corridor in a peculiar manner, and she knew perfectly well the truth of the adage that one fool makes many; so she made her preparations secretly by procuring a hand lamp and a strong cord, which she concealed in her room, and after saying good night to her pupil, who seemed strangely anxious to get rid of her, she went down to the lower corridor, and ensconced herself in the darkness just by a half-opened door, whence she could survey all who came along the passage without being herself seen.

The night watch made her feel uncomfortable, and the dark curtains of the apartment assumed strange shapes. The room seemed after awhile full of spectral forms, and she strove in vain to shake off her nervous apprehension. At length, however, the moon burst forth from behind an envious cloud, and cheered her like the presence of a friend. The clock slowly struck midnight, and the last chime had scarcely died away ere Helen fancied she heard footsteps. She peeped cautiously out, and saw the white lady glide past. She slipped into the corridor, and distinctly saw the ghost disappear in the Princess Bertha's apartment, the door of which closed noiselessly after her.

Helen returned to the sitting-room, and took her head between her two hands, as the Germans say. Her disbelief in ghosts was much shaken, and for awhile she felt terribly nervous and timid. All the ghost stories she had read in her life recurred to her, do what she would to drive them away, and she was certainly in a very uncomfortable frame of mind. At length her natural calmness returned to her; she reflected that the ghost, if it were one, had stepped very solidly, and all her reading had taught her that visitors from the other world were decidedly incorporeal; at any rate, there would be no harm in trying her experiment, so she slipped out to the stairs, tied her cord very artistically across the balustrades, and waited to see how this novel trap to catch a ghost would act.

One o'clock struck, then two, and still no ghost. Every minute was an hour in Helen's over-excited state of mind. At length—hark—there is a footfall: another—the ghost is coming down the stairs—one—two—three—four—five—six—seven—there is the last step—a heavy fall—and Helen rushed out to find the lady struggling in a very unladylike manner with her petticoats. Her mask had fallen off;

Helen assisted her to rise, and a kind ray enabled her to recognise—the Count von Eckstein.

The poor lad seemed terribly frightened, and quivered like an aspen leaf on being detected ; but Helen was not a woman to waste precious moments.

“ Your secret is mine, Count, but do not be frightened. Give me your word of honour that this is the last time you will play this foolish trick, and I will not betray you ; if not, you know your fate—the deepest dungeon at Schlangenfels, perhaps a file of musketeers, for daring to raise your eyes to your Princess.”

The boy gladly gave the promise, and, thanking Helen with tears in his eyes for her generosity, he slipped noiselessly away. Helen then proceeded to the Princess’s chamber, and demanded admittance in an imperious voice. The unhappy girl, who had heard the fall, and was fearfully alarmed, opened the door. She was ready dressed, and the disorder of the room evidenced that she had been making preparations to carry out her mad scheme of flight.

“ Bertha, Bertha,” Helen said sorrowfully, “ I did not expect this of you. You were not generous to expose me to such a risk ; for, had you carried out your flight, what would have been my fate ? ”

The Princess burst into a violent flood of tears, threw herself into Helen’s arms, and at length sobbed.—

“ Oh, if you only knew how I love Carl ! I cannot marry that Russian, and—and, as you had turned from me, I had persuaded him to fly with me. But he is innocent, dearest Helen ; it is all my fault. I persuaded him to appear as the white lady. We should have been happy, I am sure.”

“ And what is the meaning of this trumpery ? ” said Helen sternly, pointing to a white domino and mask which lay on the sofa.

“ I was going to follow Carl in that dress, and pass the guards. Once out of the palace, and everything was prepared for escape.”

“ Silly child, I should be angry with you if I was not more so with the Count. What shall I tell the Grand Duke when he asks me to-morrow ? ”

“ Oh ! for heaven’s sake do not tell him of my folly—he will be so angry. Promise me that, dearest Helen, and I will do anything you wish.”

“ On one condition I will spare you, Princess—your word of honour that you will marry the Russian prince, and you will never hear more of this night’s adventure. Silly girl,

believe me, I am only speaking for your own good. You would have been miserable with your Carl. How could he have provided you with those luxuries which have become a second nature to you? Come, kiss me, Bertha, and let me hear no more of this nonsense."

And this was the stern, matter-of-fact way in which Helen nipped the tender bud of the Princess's young affections. Hard-hearted young woman! I am almost inclined to give her up as my heroine, and enlist all my reader's sympathies for the hapless Princess. There would be something so peculiarly interesting in royal "love in a cottage;" but I forbear, for the Princess only too readily gave the required promise, very glad to be *quite pour la peur*.

The next morning Helen had an interview with the Grand Duke, who had been waiting with some anxiety her report. Her first words re-assured him.

"I am happy to inform your Royal Highness that the ghost is laid, and that the Princess has listened to my advice, and is ready to marry Prince Rubelskoff."

"Excellent young lady! you have done me an inestimable service. You discovered, then —"

"I must trust to your Royal Highness's generosity to enable me to keep the secrecy I promised."

"Enough; I ask no more. My gratitude will find a suitable reward for you. Nay, no thanks; you have satisfied the ambition of my life."

And the next morning's *Gazette* announced Helen's appointment as Chanoinesse of the Most Noble Order of the *Pommeranze*. Who would not be ready to lay down his life after that for so generous a ruler as the Grand Duke of Pumpernickel?

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAFE BIND, SAFE FIND.

THE gentleman who had so rudely interrupted Charles Dashwood's game of billiards conducted him in a cab to his new lodgings, and, after taking a most polite leave of him, left Charley for the first time in his life under lock and key. It is true it was merely a lock-up house, and bore about the same relation to a debtor's prison as the

House of Detention does to Coldbath Fields. Still, no Englishman likes to have the liberty of the subject assailed in so sudden a manner, and Charles looked with intense disgust on the filthy walls and pestiferous staircase of his new domicile.

At the top of the stairs he was met by a half-waiter, half-cad, but whole Jew, who, after taking a rapid survey of his appearance, said in a very nasal twang, "Private room, sir?"

Charles, perfectly innocent of the ways and customs of sponging-houses, answered in the affirmative, and was speedily shown into an apartment hung with pictures in gorgeous frames, the corners of which had suffered considerable abrasion, as if they were repeatedly taken down. This was, in fact, the case; for Ikey Moss, the sheriff's officer, did a good deal in paper, and these Titians and Dominichinos always represented a portion of the capital handed over for a bit of "stiff." Still he was never happy till he got them into his possession again, and had repeated the lie so often about their genuineness that he at last had grown to believe that they were a valuable property. The furniture had all been very smart in its time, but there were suspicious dents on the rosewood tables, suggestive of their having been hammered by pewter pots, and the mantelpiece had been regularly pock-marked by the burning ends of cigars. This is an amusement I can safely recommend to my juvenile readers as far preferable to the American whittling.

The Jew attendant placed a flaring mutton fat on the table and ejaculated, "Two guineas, sir."

"What for?" asked Charley.

"For the apartments. Pay in advance is the rule here."

"Rather an expensive luxury living in your hotel! Can't I have any other accommodation?"

"There is the coffee-room, sir, and a bed in the garret—six bob a night; but I don't think you'll like that, as two of the gents has been drinking and got to fighting."

"Well, it's of no consequence, I'm sure to be out tomorrow; so here's your money, and go to the devil!"

The Jew retired with an ominous grin, for how many times had he not heard the same story, and watched the prisoner's progress from Chancery Lane to Whitecross Street, and thence to the Insolvent Court? There never was a man locked up yet to whom hope did not impart the flattering tale that his imprisonment was only a matter of

a day; and how many have had their dream realised? Well, perhaps it is all for the best. If we did not live on hope, this world would be a wretched place. Charley did not merely hope, he felt confident of his release; so he only laughed at his dilemma, and with the buoyancy of youth began performing a rapid mental calculation of the income the Jew must receive from his interesting abode. But, not having a mathematical head, he soon grew tired of this occupation, and retired to bed—I trust to sleep; but this fact I am inclined to doubt, for Ikey Moss's establishment for gentlemen is not the cleanest in the world, nor is that estimable man, among his multifarious professions, an exterminator of vermin.

Well, at any rate, Charley went through the hollow mockery of bed, and got up the next morning with a very considerable appetite. He ordered breakfast, and would possibly have preferred his mutton chop without the strong flavour of red herring imparted to it by the last operation the gridiron had performed; and he thought the tea might have been stronger, considering he had five shillings to pay for the meal. After breakfast was over he began to think it was time to make arrangements about getting out, and for that purpose decided on consulting his uncle's solicitor, Mr. Short, whom he knew to be an honest man. He therefore wrote him a note, requesting his presence and detailing the circumstances of his capture, and a messenger was found, who condescended to carry it to the address for the sum of half a crown.

Soon after, Fitzspavin made his appearance, and explained to Charley the mystery of his incarceration. He had made some inquiries at the assurance office in an underhand manner, and found that my hero had been arrested on a capias, two witnesses having sworn that he had expressed an intention of quitting the country.

"What infernal scoundrels! I never said I was going out of the country."

"Stop!" said Fitzspavin. "Don't you remember your saying to me you would go with me to Chantilly races next week?"

"Yes; and what then?"

"There you have it. Some one has been watching you closely, and heard your remark. That was quite enough for Amos, and he got a writ out at once. Ah! you may well look astonished; but that's nothing new. I remember Durfey of the Guards being taken much in the same way.

He had been robbed of a watch, and was mentioning the circumstance to his tailor, who said he had no doubt the fellow would be transported. 'Then, by gad,' said Durfey, 'I'll go after him to get my watch back, for it's a family relic.' The next morning he was 'took' on a capias, the tailor and his foreman having sworn to his expressed intention of leaving the country. 'Oh, you don't know half the dodges of our precious law!'

"Well, what's to be done?" said Charley, rather non-plussed at this summary of the law of the land.

"Oh, we must get you bailed out, old fellow! I'll be one, and I daresay we can soon find another."

"But I want to get out to-day, I tell you; I have an engagement to dinner."

"Oh, that's impossible! There's lots to be done before Moss will let you go. There's the office to search, to see if there are any more detainers against you; and, though he knows it's all right, he won't let you go as long as he can milk you."

"Well, I'll be hanged if he shall, though. As soon as I have seen my lawyer I will migrate to the coffee-room, and he sha'n't have more than six bob a day out of me, if I know it."

"Well, you know best; but I'll go and see about another bondsman, and I'll let you know how matters stand before long. Ta-ta, my boy; keep your pecker up. Oh, by the way, here's a bundle of cigars for you!"

Mr. Short made his appearance soon after, and laughed very heartily at finding his young friend regarding life from a different phase. He soon understood how matters stood; he was well acquainted with Mr. Sharpe's character, and had no doubt that Charley's arrest was owing to some machination of his. This was, in fact, the case. Charley had intrusted his interests to him, but he had thought best to keep in with the office; so he had not objected to a clause that, if the first three months' interest were not paid when due, Charley would be liable to arrest for both interest and principal. Mr. Amos was a shrewd man, and thought that by arresting Charles he would frighten him into selling his reversion for some absurd sum. He had found this experiment answer excellently before, so he did not see why he should not try it again.

Mr. Short took matters so calmly that he quite exasperated my hero. However, telling him that he would attend to the matter of bail, though it might be a fortnight

before he was released, as notice of bail must be given, and things took time, he went away to look after his other clients' interests in the same insouciant manner, while Charley rang violently for the Jew waiter, and ordered him to show the way to the coffee-room.

This apartment was a sanded room, not half so clean or respectable as a public-house tap. The furniture consisted of two or three deal tables and some rickety chairs, while the heavy bars up to the windows gave the room a most dreary appearance. There were only three occupants, two gentlemen being engaged over the fireplace smoking short pipes, and amiably sharing a pot of porter, while the third, an Irishman, had his head out of the window, and was coughing violently. It was evident that the tobacco smoke annoyed him extremely; but a sponging-house is not the place to destroy selfishness.

All three had a frouzy, unshaven appearance, which showed that they must have been denizens of the coffee-room for some time; and a visit to a pump would have caused a decided improvement to their faces. After awhile they affably conversed with our hero, so soon as the awe of his swellish appearance had worn off, and unanimously abused the law and the lawyers. The Hibernian was, of course, the most furious of all, and between the paroxysms of his cough hurled imprecations on the lawmakers who had occasioned his detention. His case was certainly a hard one. He had been surety for a friend, and, of course, was let in; but when he managed to scrape up the money he found the expenses had doubled the amount, and he was sent to prison as a practical lesson not to believe in friendship. And, to hear him talk, he would not stretch out a hand to save a brother; and I have no doubt as soon as he gets out, and the remembrance of the insult has worn off, Irishman-like he will be answerable for the first countryman who asks him, and be in the same trouble again.

The other two presented no striking features. They were evidently scamps of the very commonest clay, and had no doubt been locked up for offences richly deserving such punishment. I believe it is very rare for men to get arrested unless they richly deserve it (I always except the case of owing money to a lawyer, for, of course, he will arrest you all in the way of business); but, as a general rule, tradesmen and clerks, who form nine-tenths of prisoners for debt, are not arrested until they have repeatedly broken their promises, and their creditors find there is no chance of

getting their money except by severity. Englishmen are not such a very hard-hearted set after all. Perhaps the worst are landlords; but they insure themselves against loss by seizing your traps, and grow used to the barbarity by constant repetition. But it is really very annoying to be swindled out of your money by some smooth-tongued scoundrel, and there is an exquisite gratification in having him under lock and key.

I think, though, an alteration might be safely made in our sponging-house system, and I wonder that some Irish member—for, of course, they have all passed through Chancery Lane on their way to the bar—does not get up in the House, and expose the wrongs to which debtors are subjected by Ikey Moss and his collaborateurs in the Sheriff's Court. The living in a lock-up house is simply filthy. The food is the very worst which can be procured from the adjoining slums of Clare Market, and is cooked in the most irresponsible manner. Of course, *cela va sans dire* that the tablecloth and knives and forks were never cleansed within the memory of man, and the price charged for dinner would give you a sumptuous repast at the Wellington. At any rate, these houses might be put under the surveillance of the Medical Inspector of Nuisances, and the owners forced to take out a license for a common lodging-house. This might prevent them from stuffing twelve beds into a room hardly large enough for four, and coolly receiving six shillings a head for the accommodation.

It is a dreary life at the best, and though Charles tried to make his companions happy by standing any quantity of beer, which they drank to drown their sorrow, the merriment was very factitious after all. The only relief furnished was by the entrance of new prisoners, and hearing their story. Every one was the most innocent man in the world, and arrested on the most villainous pretexts, and a general growl was raised against the lawyers. Fresh batches came in to supply the places of others whose writs were returnable and such is the strange infatuation, that men who know perfectly well that they must go to Portugal Street in the end for release, will hang on to the horrible sponging-house till the last moment, robbing their family of the money, and laying up a heavy stock of duplicates as the price of their extravagance.

Charley was savagely pacing up and down the room, and feeling like a tiger behind the bars of his cage, when a familiar face cheered him up in the shape of Mr. Leggitt,

who was well known to my hero as a turf man, and had found his way to Chancery Lane by some accident. With him Charley agreed to hire a private sitting-room, for he was growing heartily sick of the coffee-room, and the two clubbed together to find amusement.

"I tell you what it is, Dashwood," said Leggitt, after moodily gazing out of the window, "this will play old Harry with me if I don't get out soon. I have a better book than I have known for years, and have only wanted the opportunity to hedge off some bets; then I should sit in clover, and all for a paltry hundred and fifty. Such a chance of making a fortune I never had before. If things had only gone right I should have opened a betting-office before the Derby, and won a hatful of tin."

"Tell me something about the betting-offices, Leggitt," said Charley. "I have heard a great deal about them, but don't understand the rights of them. Let's see, you get in as much money as you can, and then bolt; but that won't suit you, Leggitt, for you'd lose all your commissions, and they must bring you in a tidy sum."

"No, no, I don't want to go to work that way. You see, Dashwood, the plan is simple enough. You lay odds all round, and the public always have a favourite they back. Well, if an outsider wins, you're all right; if not, you have had opportunities to hedge, and then you make yourself safe. My information is first rate, and I always know when to close my book against a horse; and, what with the scratches and the horses that are 'boiled,' a very pretty margin of profit is left. But we do not trust entirely to legitimate speculation: we have an army of prophets in our pay, who work the oracle by putting the public on an outsider, as having had an extraordinary trial, when the run on the favourite is getting too stiff, and we always take care to select a horse which we know will not be allowed to win. Then the ring helps us over our difficulties. The Leviathan would have been smashed if Berenice had won the Oaks last year, owing to the tremendous double bets he had laid; so, to secure payment of what they had already won on the Derby, the 'swells' decided that an outsider should win. Oh! it's a sure game, and if I only was out I could win lots of tin."

Charley felt interested in his friend's explanations, and eventually agreed to go halves with him in the scheme, for he fancied that he saw his way to fortune; so he produced £70, almost all that remained to him, and

accepted a bill for £200 to represent his share in the office. Mr. Leggitt managed, by some mysterious means, to raise the remainder of the money, and took an affectionate leave of Charley, assuring him that as soon as he got out again there would be lots of money for him; and I think he really meant it at the time. He was not to foresee that Charley would make a mess of it, as will always be the case when men who have not been brought up as blacklegs try to qualify themselves for that honourable profession, and fancy that the art of winning money on the turf can be acquired in six lessons, after the style of Mr Smart's writing school.

Charley grew worse and worse in spirits when Leggitt had left him, and was heartily glad if Fitzspavin came to spend an evening with him. Then they indulged in cold gin sling and piquet, and so the time slipped away as slowly as it does for the man who is waiting the death of an annuitant—a class of persons who never die. But Fitzspavin could not come always, and so Charley was driven back to the coffee-room, with its low scamps and boasted trickery. He spent uncounted half-crowns in sending despatches to Mr. Short, to which that amiable gentleman returned no answer, from the simple fact that he had been summoned to Germany by Sir Amyas, and was at that very period entertaining a select circle by an amusing and rather exaggerated description of Mr. Charles Dashwood's life as a man about town.

Charley tried everything he could imagine to make the time pass more rapidly; he even asked the waiter (familiarly termed Shady, his name being Shadrach) to lend him a book to read, and was soon buried in the refreshing pages of the Newgate Calendar; but that proving too exciting for his present temper, and suggesting some wild thoughts that he would have no objection to be hanged at Newgate if he could only imitate Mr. Richard Turpin, and place Mr. Amos on a brisk fire for half an hour, Charles was obliged to return the book to its owner, and try the nearest circulating library. The sympathising bookseller sent him "VANITY FAIR," and in the perusal of that wondrous book Charles found the hours slip away only too rapidly, and he was heartily grieved when the gas was put out, and he was forced to retire to his garret. On the other hand, the night appeared unending, which so enviously debarred him from the continuation of his reading, and he stopped hardly for his meals till he reached the last page; but only

to commence again, and he found new beauties the more closely he read—fresh allusions which he had passed over, and which filled him with renewed amazement at the omniscience of the writer. At last he could not be pacified until he had made the book his own by purchase, and he hugged it to his heart, as the truest friend he had found in his purgatory.

And I believe that the perusal of the book did him permanent good, and he determined that he too would be an author, and strive to furnish his quota to the common weal by a description of his own experiences. Every young writer must be objective; it is so much easier to describe than to invent. Witness the "Crescent and the Cross," the most charming book of travels our century has boasted: compare it with Darien, and *longum abludit imago*. Not that poor Eliot Warburton, had he been spared, would not have enrolled his name worthily among the best writers of the day, but his extant works prove that he was in a state of transition, and had not yet learned to trust in his own powers.

To evidence the hold Mr. Thackeray had on my hero, I may mention that he sedulously avoided reading any other novels, and, though possibly a perusal of Mrs. A. or Mr. B.'s crudities might have increased his reverence for Thackeray, by showing him the inaccessibility of the pinnacle on which that great man has placed himself, he wisely forbore. Not that he had as yet appreciated the exquisite skill by which Thackeray conceals his art, and proves himself the most consummate artisan; on the contrary, the simplicity of the style deceived Charley, and he fancied nothing could be easier than to imitate his terseness. His vanity was not great enough to induce him to believe he could approach the wit, but in the other point he was also mistaken. Thackeray is inimitable, and this has been proved by the utter fiasco clever writers have made when they attempted to follow too closely in his footsteps. It is like a rustic's hobnailed boot trying to fill the exact mark left by a lady's Balmoral boot.

At length Charley was released from his Chancery Lane purgatory by the return of the writ, and Mr. Moss informed him, with unfeigned regret, that he would have to leave and go to prison. Charley resisted all the insidious suggestions that he should go before a judge, and be allowed to transfer himself to the Queen's Bench. He had a notion that Whitecross Street would furnish him with more original matter for his meditated book, and so he chartered a cab,

and drove confidently off to Cripplegate. After enjoying his comparative liberty, and pouring forth a libation to the Manes in the shape of a pot of porter, he entered the frowning gateway of Whitecross Street prison, that half-way house to the Insolvent Court.

CHAPTER XXV.

BURDON'S HOTEL.

IT WAS ON A Saturday evening that my hero had the distinguished honour of sitting for his portrait in the porter's lodge of the Whitecross Street Hotel. This operation being speedily performed, he was conducted through various strong doors, which the turnkey viciously banged after him, as a sign of the impossibility of escape, into the receiving ward, a long whitewashed room, with a few tables and chairs, where he found three or four gentlemen comfortably seated, and drinking their after-dinner port. The warden, an old man, who had resided in the prison for years, in consequence of some smuggling transactions, took charge of his carpet bag, and, after instituting some inquiries as to whether he liked sheets on his bed, proceeded to explain to him the rules and regulations of Her Majesty's prison.

Charley found them very satisfactory, and the change from the filth of Chancery Lane was highly agreeable. With money a man has no necessity to deny himself luxuries even in a prison, and a very decent supper, for which he was charged only two shillings, was an excellent substitute for Shadrach's herring-flavoured mutton chops. A comfortable bed, for which he only paid one shilling, received him, and he was enabled to sleep without fear of nocturnal invaders of his rest. In fact, so comfortable did the prison appear to him, that he only felt annoyed that he had not moved thither before, instead of listening to Shady's gloomy representations of the horrors of prison life.

The next day, being Sunday, Charles was obliged to spend in the receiving-ward, and amused himself by conversation with a grey-haired rustic, who was incarcerated for forty days for the magnificent sum of eighteenpence. He had been condemned to pay that amount weekly on a county court decision, as instalment of a doctor's bill he owed for

his wife's illness. The poor woman died, and he was thrown out of work; but the dignity of the county court must be maintained at all hazards, so his committal was made out, and, without regard to his prayers to be allowed to see the last of his poor wife, he was dragged off to prison, and would cost his country some five pounds before he was liberated. But the principle must be maintained at any expense, and poor Hobnail, though forced to confess that it was all right he 'sposed, was sadly put to it to comprehend why he was punished as severely for the non-payment of eighteenpence as if he had snared a hare.

But, although the denizens of the receiving-ward were, I doubt not, a great set of scamps, they could not listen to the poor old fellow's story unmoved, and therefore willingly acquiesced in Charles's proposition to get up a subscription for him, to find him in tobacco, at any rate, during his incarceration. The result proved so satisfactory that the old man brightened up wonderfully, and I daresay would have consented to a further period of imprisonment on the same terms. However, the majesty of the law must be protected, and so he was sent down into the poor debtors' ward to mingle with a set of scamps, who would soon teach him wickedness enough to laugh at the hitherto unknown terrors of the county court.

In the afternoon the debtors were visited by the chaplain, who rarely condescended to make his appearance in the regular prison, but had no objection to associate with the inmates of the receiving-ward, the majority of whom were on their passage to the Queen's Bench, and were allowed to remain here until the necessary arrangements had been made. He had not the slightest unwillingness to drink a glass or so of wine, and proved his interest in the moral welfare of the prisoners by sharply reprimanding the warden for not getting the wine in from the Pig and Whistle. "This stuff," he added, "I am sure, comes from the Saracen, and is not fit to drink," which remark induced Charles to believe, very unjustly I have no doubt, that the holy man must be a very regular visitor to the neighbouring public-houses. However, he made up for this by reading the rustic a lengthened lecture on the immorality of not paying his creditors, but unaccountably neglected to give him anything which might enable him to do so—except advice. Then, expressing a hope that he should see the gentleman at afternoon service, he waddled out of the ward, with a sweet consciousness that he had done his duty

as a clergyman and a brother. I am afraid that the prisoners were not edified by his remarks, for they neglected to accept his invitation, with the exception of Hobnail, who had been forced to go to church every Sunday by his vicar, and had too high a respect for the cloth to infringe any of its ordinances.

On the Monday morning Charles was conducted to the Middlesex side of the prison, and left to his own resources. The place did not assume any peculiarly stern aspect, and he was more and more lost in conjectures as to the effect produced by imprisonment for debt. On entering No. 4 ward, to which he had been allotted, he was hailed by a grey-haired man, who announced himself as steward of the ward, and requested the pleasure of his company at dinner and the other meals. By the payment of a guinea he would be found in cooking, boot-cleaning, knives and forks, &c., and be freed from the unpleasant duties of pumping water, making beds, &c., which devolved on the poorer prisoners, who received a weekly sum for that purpose. In addition, he would have the advantage of reading all the newspapers, and, to show the impartiality of the managing committee, even the *Morning Herald* was taken in. Then followed an introduction to the president of the ward, and Charles had become a "fellow of the college."

The large yard in which the prisoners took exercise had two shops established in it, one for the sale of groceries, &c., the other for beer; and there was nothing to prevent your getting as drunk as you pleased, that is, if you possessed the requisite funds; otherwise, I think a prison must be an unpleasant place. Roll-call was held at four o'clock, and after that dinner was served—a very excellent repast, clean and comfortable, for the sum of half a crown. Charles was rather amused when the steward asked him if he wished for wine with his dinner, and explained to him that, although the regulations of the prison only allowed him a pint for himself, there would be no difficulty in procuring a dozen. All prisoners being equal in the eye of the law enjoyed equal privileges; but the majority of them being unable to appreciate the taste of wine would be glad to exchange their privilege for a pint of porter; so Charles, as the new member, had not the slightest objection to standing half a dozen of sherry to the steward's table, for which he was voted a brick, and his health drunk most uproariously.

As for amusement there was any quantity. Cards, chess, and draughts were allowed, but no gambling. The governor

had instituted a sub-prefecture in each ward, who held office on condition that they would generally strive to keep the peace and prohibit dice; and I must do them the credit to say that they faithfully kept their word. I daresay they would have had no objection to pick your pocket, but break a promise never. After dinner, however, an hour was devoted to the sale of the daily papers by auction, and to the trial of all offences against good manners, which often led to some amusing scenes, as the culprit was allowed the privilege of counsel, and there were always attorneys enough in prison to carry on the farce; but the person on trial was certain to be condemned for the sake of the fine, which went to the common treasury. I have forgotten to say, by the way, that the entrance money was lent to the steward on security of his plates, dishes, &c., in order that he might carry out the duties of his office in a respectable manner.

At nine o'clock the bell rang for bed, and Charles, who, according to custom, had paid for two gallons of beer, found that beverage converted into egg-slop, and awaiting him in the dormitory. The room was clean, and contained a dozen iron beds fastened down securely to the floor, as it seemed, and by the provident care of the steward he had clean sheets and a feather bed for himself. Then commenced an ordeal which would terminate Charles's novitiate. The prisoners collected solemnly in a circle, and a long-legged attorney's clerk, who had been unanimously elected president of the room, owing to the advice *gratis* he was in the habit of giving, proceeded to address my hero as follows:—

“Mr. Charles Dashwood, in accordance with the immemorial customs of Burdon's Hotel it is my painful duty to put certain questions to you, which you will have to answer on honour. In the first place, then, how long did you stay at the lock-up?”

“A week.”

“And did you pay your bill?”

“I did.”

Chorus. “Oh, what a muff! what a muff!”

The president waved his hand, then continued, “I presume, Mr. Charles Dashwood, you came here in a cab. Did you pay for it yourself, or leave that to the myrmidons of the law?”

“I paid it,” replied my hero, humbly conscious of his great fault.

Chorus. “Oh, what a muff! Oh, what a muff!”

“Having thus evidenced your greenness, Mr. Dashw

I need not ask whether you also paid for the beer you drank. By your own confession you have been guilty of grave crimes against the privileges of debtors. How say you, gentlemen, is Mr. Dashwood guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty, decidedly," was the unanimous reply.

"The justice of this honourable court being tempered with mercy, I shall not inflict the strict punishment upon you, in consideration of the beer you have stood; but I trust this will prove a warning to you whenever you may again be brought to this hotel. The court is dissolved. Mr. Dashwood, your health, and confusion to your enemies." And, seizing a half-gallon can, Mr. Robbins let about a quart of the insidious fluid gently glide down his throat, to the unmitigated disgust of the other members of the room. The beer being soon disposed of, the gentlemen seemed ripe for mischief, and while Charles retired to bed, utterly amazed at the working of the law of imprisonment for debt, the others, instigated by a half-pay captain, smashed all the crockery, which they threw out of window, and ended by forcibly dragging up one of the iron bedsteads, which they hurled down the stone stairs with a frantic din. This, of course, woke up the turnkeys, and they prepared for a general action; but, the door of the room being barricaded, they were unable to force an entrance, and were obliged to utter fierce threats through the keyhole, which were greeted with shouts of sarcastic laughter. At length tranquillity was restored, and the ward went off to sleep.

In the morning the prisoners rose at eight o'clock, hot water being brought for shaving purposes, with the exception of Mr. Robbins, who preferred being locked in till twelve, and "doing a skulk," as he elegantly termed it. Nothing came of the nocturnal disturbance, for the strong room would not contain all the culprits, and it was impossible to detect the ringleaders, so the place was put straight again, and the beds secured with double stanchions, to prevent, if possible, another row. The crockery belonging to the steward was replaced by a general subscription among the wardsmen, and they could break it again if they liked on the same terms.

In the evening No. 3 ward invited No. 4 ward to a harmonic meeting, and the great point appeared to consist in singing very improper songs, for the purpose of annoying two or three white-choked individuals, who sat in a corner reading good books and trying to stop their ears with their fingers. What business such respectable-looking men had

in a prison it would be difficult to say ; but if they thought it a good place for missionary efforts they were sadly mistaken, for so much blasphemy and bad language have hardly ever been congregated before in so small a space. For my part, I believe a meeting of ticket-of-leave men more respectable than Her Majesty's prison for debtors.

As may be supposed, the prisoners, having little else to do, indulged in mischief to an alarming extent, and practical joking was the order of the day. In this the attorney's clerk was the ringleader ; and, having an admirable talent for forgery, he amused himself with writing insulting letters to persons in the name of other debtors, whose handwriting he was acquainted with through his legal assistance to them. He succeeded in getting up two or three fights, which afforded him intense gratification ; but, being at last detected in the act, was most ignominiously cobbed, in which performance the whole of the ward joined. Among other amusements was gin-hunting : as spirits were prohibited, everybody tried his hardest to have them smuggled in. When a prisoner succeeded in this feat, and stowed away his bottle in his locker for his own private delectation, the joke was to wait till his back was turned and drink the spirits, carefully filling up the bottle with water. Of course the victim could not complain to the turnkeys, and his comic outbreak of rage afforded fun for amusement till the next practical joke diverted attention from him.

Although the prisoners were imbued with a true spirit of republican fraternity, and held out a helping hand to any new comer who candidly said that he was unable to take up his freedom, they showed no mercy to any prisoner whom they thought unwilling to pay his guinea fee. It was always very easy to find out from the man on the lock what any prisoner was in for, and, if he declined paying, his life was a burden to him. He became a perfect Ishmaelite, every man's hand being raised against him. If he tried to boil a cup of coffee it was sure to be overset ; if he attempted to cook a chop it fell into the fire or on the sandy floor by some inexplicable means. No one spoke to him ; he was an outcast of society, and when he sat down to read or write he was saluted by lumps of coal and pieces of wood from every corner of the room. The most obstinate were forced to give in ; they could not go on in this wretched state, and at last produced their money, which had been sewn up in their coat, or cleverly hidden in lumps of sealing wax. As a general rule these men were fraudulent

bankrupts, whom the debtors' prison saved from an acquaintance with Newgate, or who did not dare appeal to the Insolvent Court, in the knowledge that they would be sent back for an unlimited period, and removed to the "poor debtors'" ward, where imprisonment was no joke, as beer and tobacco were strictly forbidden.

But, let a prisoner go into Whitecross Street with ever so honest intentions, I defy him to touch pitch without being defiled. A swarm of blackguard attorneys flock in as soon as the gates are open in the morning, and try their hand on the new prisoners, strongly recommending the Insolvent Court as a panacea for all social wrongs. They take good care to get their fees before moving in the matter, and run them up to more than a respectable practitioner would charge; but then they are so knowing, and up to so many dodges, that a prisoner instinctively feels a respect for them as soon as he begins to find that in the prison the greatest rogue is considered the cleverest fellow. As for any good resulting from imprisonment the idea is simply a farce. A honest man becomes dishonest by association with scamps of every degree, and his notion of paying his creditors by his industry soon seems to him pre-eminently ridiculous. The prison is a very jolly place as long as he has any money for beer and tobacco; and if not, why he can get whitewashed, and can set up in business again with a fine stock of fraudulent "notions" acquired in prison. There is nothing like a prison for debt for sharpening the intellect.

One afternoon, when Charley was growing rather tired of prison life, although he had only had three days of it—but the monotony was beginning to grow palling, and practical jokes cannot be laughed at always—he was informed that he was wanted at the door. On going out he found Mr. Sharpe waiting to speak to him, and the thought of revenge crossed his mind. But the difficulty was to get Mr. Sharpe in; he fought very cunning, and preferred keeping the bars betwixt him and Charles. At length the specious offer of a bottle of wine overcame all his wise resolutions, and he trusted himself in the prison, a lamb among the wolves.

On entering the ward Mr. Sharpe expressed his regret at his client being in such an awkward predicament, and stated that he had tried hard to induce Mr. Amos to rescind his decision, but he was inexorable. The only thing that would satisfy him would be, that my hero should give him autho-

rity to sell his reversion right out, and he would hand over the difference. But Charles had had by this time sufficient experience of Mr. Amos and his tricks, and was determined to stay in prison for ever, sooner than give him further opportunity for plundering him.

At this moment Mr. Robbins came past, and Charley gave vent to an almost inaudible "miauw," which that gentleman perfectly comprehended, and went to work with a smiling face. Mr. Sharpe felt uncomfortable, but wisely said nothing to irritate his late client. He finished the bottle, and then said he must see about getting back to business. Poor Mr. Sharpe! better had he remained at his office than ventured into the lion's den. He had scarcely entered the yard ere an ominous cry of "Rat, rat!" greeted his ears, and he was mobbed in a second. Some prisoners tore his coat up and jumped on his hat; others broke bags of flour over him, while Mr. Robbins danced about insanely with a huge can of lime and water, which he impartially daubed over the unhappy attorney from head to foot. The turnkeys looked on placidly till the exasperated prisoners dragged their victim to the pump and nearly drowned him; then they thought it time to interpose, and made a rush to save the unhappy man. With great difficulty they succeeded in withdrawing him from their clutches, and got him half drowned into the lodge, where they wiped him down as well as they could, and turned him out with a recommendation not to trust himself there again, which, we may be quite sure, Mr. Sharpe vowed to remember.

This was the last scene Charley was destined to witness in prison, for his uncle's lawyer, having by this time returned, took the matter seriously in hand. He saw Mr. Amos, and bullied him so heartily, by threatening that Charles would go through the court, and then the secrets of the office would be brought before the public, that Mr. Amos was very glad to be satisfied with a judgment bond, and agreed to let the matter stand over till Mr. Dashwood could settle his affairs. The discharge was then sent down, and my hero was at liberty to depart. This he took no long time in effecting; and, after leaving all his loose silver to be spent in beer, he quitted Burdon's Hotel, accompanied by a hearty cheer from all the prisoners, and a sincere wish that he might not see the inside of a prison again. He was not fit for it they all agreed, and I think my readers will be of the same opinion. At any rate, Charles's desire of seeing life had been thus gratified; and, though it was

one of its dirtiest phases, it may possibly prove of use to him hereafter.

On gaining his liberty once more my hero hurried to Mr. Short's, to ask his advice as to what had better be done in the matter, that gentleman saying that, as he had been such a fool already, the only thing was to carry out his folly by the absolute sale of his reversion. Charley very simply suggested that Mr. Short should take the matter in hand; but the little lawyer, having a very wholesome fear of Sir Amyas's wrath, declined interfering in the matter without that gentleman's consent. However, he said there would be no difficulty in finding a person willing to accommodate him, and bowed him out.

Charles then went to look for his friend Leggitt, whom he found comfortably ensconced in a betting-office near Long Acre. The place was very flashily decorated with pictures of celebrated racers, and there had been a lavish expenditure of mahogany and brass. He was in high spirits, and was doing an excellent business. There was only one horse that could hurt them, but he trusted to make that all right before the Derby day. He had not discounted Charley's bill yet, nor should he do so unless there was a pressure. Thence they proceeded to Tattersall's, and found Fitzspavin hail fellow well met with a sporting prize-fighter, in high spirits because he had made a capital book.

Altogether, things looked very well, and Charles began to think that he would be able to repay Mr. Amos very shortly without having occasion to embarrass his reversion further. Full of this flattering tale, he wrote a long letter to Helen, in which he told her, very falsely, that he was busily engaged in trying to solve the mystery which separated them, and bade her hope for the best. This task completed, he went off to dine at Simpson's, and amused himself by seeing Mr. Wright in Paul Pry; and if any of my readers can suggest a more infallible method of curing low spirits, I would recommend him to advertise it at once, and he will be sure of making a rapid fortune.

CHAPTER XXVI.

▲ MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.

BELINDA in tears and book-muslin frantically gnashes her handkerchief, and vows that no hard-hearted paternal decree shall separate her from the beloved of her heart, young Harry Rackett. With him love and a cottage would be elysium. What need they care for wealth or a roast turkey, when love and a mutton chop will prove all-sufficing? True, O Belinda! but the young Rackets, those sweet pledges of affection whom you do not take into account now, but who are sure to bear testimony to the love subsisting between you and your Harry? Love is a very fine thing we are all ready to allow, but it does not pay a butcher's bill, nor will the evidence of your attachment satisfy Mr. Suett when he calls for your little account. Your wedding garments, too, will become shabby sooner or later, and I do not see how you can induce any draper to supply you with the necessary quantity of silk on the strength of your love.

Believe me, Belinda, that your parents are acting all for the best, although you think them so hard-hearted. They know that your Harry is a spendthrift ensign, whose ability has hitherto been only evinced by running into debt, and they wisely prefer Mr. Ruggles, the eminent grocer, who has offered you his hand and his business, which you rejected with a degree of contumely which that worthy man did not deserve. You must remember you have only seen the fair side of your Harry at present; he has never as yet been compelled to go without any luxury he required, and I can assure you does not intend to do so, although he may be so fond of you. If you marry him you may look out for matrimonial squalls, and by the time your spirit is broken you will have degenerated into a miserable drudge, whom other parents will point out as a warning to their children.

Come, I am glad to see you are listening to reason, Belinda. The thought of the comfortable house at Woodford, and the brougham in which you can go and make your purchases without stint, is having its due effect. Common sense whispers, "Marry Ruggles and be happy," and romance is put to flight by the stern reality I have

conjured up. Twenty years hence, when you are in a condition to represent George the Fourth's idealism of a woman, you will see your old flame parading Regent Street with a fierce black moustache and a very red nose, looking under the bonnet of every girl who passes with a bold, audacious stare, and you will thank kind destiny for preserving you from such a man. But do not, with your natural goodness of heart, fancy that your separation from your Harry drove him to drown his despair in the bowl, as is only too plainly proved by his nose. Be assured that he was by nature a selfish, worthless fellow, and, not having you as his slave, he is not a bit the worse off on that account. Your Ruggles looks positively handsome by the side of that gallant officer, and you have learned to appreciate his good qualities. Then, Belinda, be warned, and remember that you strive sedulously to drive all such love-sick nonsense out of your daughters' minds.

But mind me, I do not bid you treat your children in the way your respected parents thought they could only break your stubbornness. I do not recommend you to lock Sarah Jane into her bedroom, and condemn her to bread and water, because she has been fascinated by a young Adonis in the shape of a chemist's apprentice.

"Be to her faults a little kind,
And clap the padlock on her mind,"

is the advice that Prior gives us, and it is as true now as it was in his day. More can be done by persuasion than force, and it is not only the asinine tribe with which this great rule holds good.

This long exordium is only intended as an introduction to the marriage of the Princess Bertha, who, by dint of Helen's persuasions and judicious use of threats, was brought to consent to the marriage with Prince Rubelskoff. But I do not think Helen was quite right in this matter. Although averse to those marriages of love which, as a rule, turn out a sad disappointment, on the other hand, I am equally opposed to the French plan, in which the young lady is sold to her future husband, and handed over to almost certain wretchedness. The plan may be found to work well in Stamboul; but I doubt whether any Mahomedan institutions can be engrafted with advantage on European habits. Although, then, agreeing with Helen that it was advisable to nip at once the absurd attachment to young Eckstein, I blame my heroine for rushing to the

other extreme, and forcing the Princess into a marriage which must be most distasteful for her.

I fancy Helen herself felt a twinge as to the correctness of her policy, and deep anguish for the sacrifice of her mistress's young heart, when she saw the gentleman who was to become her husband. The Russians are by no means remarkable for good looks, the general impression they convey being that they must all have been sat upon, as to their faces, in extreme youth; while the projecting cheek bones, the delight of the hybrid aristocracy, reveal the true Mongol type. The German heaviness which lurks about their faces indicates the admixture of blood; while the stereotyped frown proves their dissatisfaction at their wretched social position. *Grattez le Russe et vous trouverez le Tatare* was one of the wisest axioms of a very wise man.

I know that it will be alleged, in opposition to this, that the Emperor Nicholas was the handsomest man in Europe. This I am inclined to doubt. He was a very fine soldierly-looking man, it is true; but his only claim to beauty is to be found in the fact that he was an exception to the general rule of ugliness peculiar to reigning houses on the continent, which all bear a great resemblance in their features, owing to their in-and-in breeding. Take a portrait of Nicholas and examine it closely, and you will agree with me that the face is a most unpleasant one; the feeling it conjures up is a devout gratitude that you are not exposed to the merciless decrees of such a tyrant, for despotism lurks in every line, and brutality lies in the wrinkles of the mouth. The eagle eye may be found, I grant; but to me it only produces the impression of a foul, unclean bird of prey—I cannot trace the noble bird which soars in air, rejoicing in its liberty. Nor can it be urged that the stern despotic look I dislike is solely the result of the position the Czar held as uncontrolled ruler of thirty-five million slaves, who worshipped the Nemesis he represented, and hopelessly sought the milder attributes of the divinity he aped. Take the present Emperor, who is regarded as a gentle monarch—the same marked traits are visible in his countenance. Nero when young and Nero when old underwent no change of physiognomy except that natural on advancing years. The tiger cub sports with you, the full-grown animal rends you to pieces; but in both cases it is true to its instincts.

Prince Rubelskoff was probably the ugliest man among his fellows. His bald head and flat nose gave him the

appearance of a Silenus; but, so soon as you scanned his face, you saw that there was none of that old god's joviality about him. Were the French, in any contingent revolution, to set up a male god of reason, Prince Rubelskoff would act the character admirably. There is nothing so fearful as the grin of the hyena, whatever Schiller may say to the contrary, except, perhaps, the look of a Russian when he tries to smile his way into your confidence, you knowing the while he would gladly bury a knife in your heart. But the Prince was "all things to all men;" he conversed fluently in every possible language but Russian, and never threw away a chance of exciting a friendly feeling. Even a servant was not beneath his fascination. Had he been seated with you in the dark you would have considered him the most perfect gentleman you had ever met with, but the first glare of candlelight would have destroyed the impression. The Prince knew there was a *fauve* look about his face, and wore blue spectacles to conceal it, which, in my mind, only rendered him more like Jacques Ferrand than ever.

Of course he made a perfect *furore* at Gürkenhof: the ladies of the court, with the feminine liking for monstrosities, all went mad about him, and only proved the truth of John Wilkes' assertion, "that an ugly man was but half an hour behind the handsomest." His success at court was astounding, and the Grand Duke thought it high time that the marriage should take place, for the Prince paid too many visits to the Countess, and his senile vanity was roused. I do not think that the Countess, however, was really caught by the amiable man. I never knew a French-woman yet who obeyed the inspirations of her heart, and the Countess's fancy could hardly be caught by this Russian ogre. Still she was not averse to flattery (indeed, what woman is?), and the delicate attentions of the Prince, not to mention the large sums he lost to her at écarté, were very pleasant. Besides, it drew her lord and master from fluttering round younger ladies, and the Countess was only too glad to be able to effect that without the vulgar necessity of a quarrel.

The Princess Bertha was the only person at court apparently unaffected by the presence of the Russian. On his presentation she bowed, and took a furtive glance at her future husband from beneath her long eyelashes; but not a sign displayed her feelings. She received with equal indifference the magnificent jewels which the Prince sent her, and not even the malachite box in which they were con-

tained could draw a smile from her. There was something very wrong, and Helen bitterly regretted the part she had played in what she now began to regard as a very iniquitous transaction. If black men were protected from slavery, *a fortiori* white women ought not to be sold into slavery, worse because the chains were gilded and flight was impossible.

Such being the state of things, Helen strove diligently to teach her pupil to regard the holy estate of matrimony as a solemn institution, which must not be lightly entered into, but approached with a pure and reverent spirit; but she was disarmed at once by the Princess saying, "You wished this marriage: all I ask is, let me carve out my lot after my own fashion. The daughter of the Grand Duke will be true to herself."

"But, Bertha dearest, you mistake me. I only wished to save you from the certain misery of flight with young Eckstein, and ——"

"You have helped to force me into this marriage. I trust you are satisfied with your achievement. Am I not to be envied? Look at all those jewels—my purchase money; that magnificent lace veil, which is to be spread over the victim as it is led to the altar; think of my palace in St. Petersburg, and my magnificent prospects. What is a broken heart in comparison with such worldly blessings?"

"Dearest Bertha, you terrify me. I thought you were willing to accede to this marriage. You expressed your readiness to receive the Prince, and, now that he has arrived, it is too late to break off. The *esclandre* would be too great."

"And who wishes to break it off? Not I. You told me that in the event of my refusal you would be compelled to make known my deplorable folly with young Eckstein. Does my pride go for nothing? Do you imagine the Princess Bertha could survive the knowledge that the ladies of the court were smiling at her intrigue with a court page? No! you may be quite calm; I do not love young Eckstein now. At times I doubt whether I ever felt anything beyond gratitude to him for trying to extricate me from my position. I am a woman now, and will put away all childish things. But one thing I must ask you, dear Helen—do not talk to me of religion, or of matrimony being a holy rite. Let me have my faith to console me in my trials. If you deprive me of that by forcing me to believe

in the sanctity of this shameful mockery, I shall be truly miserable."

"Bertha, it grieves me to find you giving way to such a temper, and to feel that all my teaching has been in vain. Self-willed I knew you were, but I did not think that you would blight your prospects of happiness so recklessly, merely because you were thwarted in your wishes. Why did you not confide in me, dearest child? I might have averted this odious marriage; but now you have given your consent, and must go through with your self-imposed task. Let me hope that the spirit of religion to which you have alluded will sustain you; but I fear ——"

"What, my Helen? Oh! I shall be an excellent wife. I have no doubt the Prince will prove a model husband, so cheer up, mignonne, and let us talk about other matters. You saw the *Tulpenhain* this morning: what does she say about the marriage?"

"The Countess is well pleased, as you may suppose, and is anxious that the marriage shall take place as speedily as possible. She has offered dowries for five young maidens who are to be married on the same day as yourself."

"Money, money, always! Why does she want to make others wretched as well as myself? Oh! this is a strange world, Helen. Thank God, I feel that I shall not be in it long!"

"Foolish fancies, dearest. Once at St. Petersburg and the admiration of a brilliant court, these sickly ideas will be dissipated. You have many years of happiness in store for you, if you will only regard matters with a contented spirit."

"Well, well, enough of this," said the Princess pettishly; "and now for our walk."

Such were some of the trying scenes to which Helen was subjected by the Princess's approaching marriage, and she more and more regretted that she had, in a manner, forced her into so anomalous a position. But there was no resource left; the marriage could not be prevented; the Grand Duke had set his heart on it, and was only awaiting its conclusion to go for his usual summer excursion to Pyrmont; so Helen with a sad heart watched the preparations, and tried more and more patiently to read her pupil's mind, which had become a sealed book for her. But the Princess did not undergo the slightest change; she still kept up the old stolid indifference, and did not seem moved by all the attentions bestowed on her by Prince Rubelskoff, or the affectionate endearments of her father. She declined

Helen's offer to accompany her to St. Petersburg, as if determined to break off every link which attached her to home. The only thing in which she evinced any interest was in attending to Helen's future interests, and it was eventually decided that she should go and live with the Countess Tulpenhain as dame de compagnie until some arrangements could be made for her future welfare, as both the Grand Duke and the Princess wished that she should be amply rewarded for her past devotion to them.

The morning broke gloomily on which the wedding solemnity was to take place; but the clouds gradually dispersed, and the sun shone out brilliantly. May it prove a happy omen of the Princess's future life! The citizens had made the requisite preparations in honour of their young mistress's departure from among them, and triumphal arches and banners evinced their loyalty. There was the usual amount of intoxication required on such interesting occasions, and many a blushing girl caught the infection, and fixed the day for her own wedding.

The ceremony took place in the private chapel of the palace, the whole court being invited to attend. It was noticed that a faint blush suffused the Princess's face as she passed through the double line of court pages; but this was the only evidence of her being more than a machine. Helen watched her closely, fearing she knew not what might impede the celebration of the marriage. But her fears were not realised: the Princess was married according to the rites of the Greek church, receiving the name of Vassilovka, and the court banquet terminated the proceedings. Within an hour the married couple started for Vevay, where they were to spend the honeymoon.

The court seemed very dull to Helen after the departure of her pupil, and she amused herself as well as she could by making preparations for migrating to the Countess's house, and packing up the trifling presents she had consented to receive as remembrances of the Princess. She was interrupted, however, by a circumstance which took a load from her heart, and made her feel happier than she had done for months. It was very simple, being merely a letter from Julie, dated at some impossible place in Carinthia. She had not yet been able to find her truant Count, but was on his track; but she was now in want of money, and begged Helen to send her five hundred francs to the poste restante at Trieste. The letter then went on:—

“I know your good heart, Miss Helen, and that you will

send me this money without any further explanation on my part ; but I may tell you that it depends on my finding the Count whether you will ever be able to prove your legitimacy. He carried off all the papers poor Madame had, and these should have been mine had not the villain deceived me so cruelly. But be under no alarm ; he must suffer for his crime, and Julie is predestined to be the instrument of vengeance. I will not tell you who your father is, from the uselessness of raising hopes which can only be realised by the recovery of the papers. Better you should remain in ignorance than appeal to a father who will only recognise you when compelled to do so by law. But one thing I may say now to ease your mind. Mr. Charles is not your brother, and there is no impediment to your marriage. Ah ! had I not listened to the insidious schemes of the Count, all might have turned out happily for you before now ; but it is in God's hand."

My readers can imagine the sudden revulsion the receipt of this letter produced in Helen. Although she had long felt assured that her poor mother had purposely deceived her, this confirmation exceeded her hopes. There was, then, no obstacle to her marriage with Charles ; but stay, she could not consent to marry him until her legitimacy were proved. His son must not be liable to have his mother's reproach cast in his teeth. No, she must wait and hope. Julie spoke so assuredly of being able to procure the requisite papers, she believed the woman meant honestly by her, and was determined to revenge herself on the Count after her own fashion. At any rate, there should be no obstacle in her way as far as money was concerned, so she sent off £50 at once to Trieste. But the post in Germany is proverbially slow, and long before the letter reached its destination Julie had started for Turkey, whither she heard that the Count had gone. He felt that Julie was on his track, and he thought it best to migrate to a country where such a trifling as having committed a murder does not weigh much with the authorities, so long as you have money in your pocket to be robbed of. Hereafter we shall see whether Julie carried her vow into execution ; but I am inclined to think she will, for she is both a woman and a Corsican, and not at all disposed to be robbed of her revenge.

In the meanwhile my Helen retired to the Countess Tulpenhain, who received her with great distinction, and conferred on her the remarkable honour of allowing her to teach her macaw English. Very good society met at her

house, for in Germany the Countess's position is one of every day, and no one is unwilling to associate with her so long as she keeps within bounds. Here and there a noble of the old school might object to his wife or his daughter putting a bar sinister across their two-and-thirty quarterings by mixing in society with a French milliner and left-handed wife; but, as a general rule, people were less straitlaced. At any rate, to make up for this, the company was very amusing, and the Grand Duke used to bring all the letters he received from his daughter, and read them in solemn conclave.

Helen was pleased to find that her pupil wrote in better spirits; the lovely scenery round Vevay had a soothing effect on her temper, and the immense reverence paid to her as Princess Rubeiskoff, fourteenth cousin to His Majesty the Emperor, had its proper effect. Having a strong natural turn for satire, her letters ran over with absurd remarks about the people who were presented to her, and it seemed that she could do what she liked with the Prince, who was very proud of his lovely German wife, and treated her like a valuable toy which he was afraid of breaking. Whether this mode of treating a young lady who had carefully studied Tennyson's "Princess" was the best, I may be disposed to doubt; but, at any rate, there can be no question but that the Princess had already weighed the distinction between a palace with the Prince and a cottage with the Count, and the scale was slowly sinking in favour of the former.

If the marriage eventually turn out happily, all the better; but I am sadly afraid that in this instance the Princess has gone to the other extreme. "Love and a cottage" may be absurd; but "misery and a palace" are probably many degrees worse. Let us trust that she may be spared from that fate.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DERBY DAY.

THE Derby day! What wondrous reminiscences are evoked by that word! What magnificent headaches, hanging about one for a week or so, have followed on the "day at the Derby!" What kaleidoscopic pictures made of orange,

red, white, blue, green, and black hover about one's dreams for a week afterwards. Dorling's "corre-card," as uttered in the raucous voice of countless cads, rings in one's ears, and laughs the Bank! Bank! and Hansom, sir? to scorn. As you walk along the streets you think every person you meet a turf man, and you address respectable city men with, "Take you ten to one on Barber," or so on.

But the anticipations of the Derby are more surprising still. I abstract all considerations as to the relative merits of blue or green veils, road or rail, champagne or porter: whether North or South will prove the victor at the "Isthmian games" is a matter of supremest indifference to nine-tenths of the visitors. Perhaps, were there no horses at all, it would be just the same. All they care for is one day free from the burly and brattle of business, and the possibility of getting drunk without any customer having a right to blame you for it. The attorney's clerks, who risk their necks at seven and sixpence from the Elephant and Castle behind the most extraordinary team which is reserved from the knacker's yard for that day only, and who manage to get on the course just after the race is run, are not so greatly disappointed after all. To them the Derby is an idealism of porter and tobacco, and, so long as they have their day out, the race is but the mere excuse, unless they indulge in a "sweep," condemning them to an outlay of half-crowns, and there is considerable excitement attaching to the winner.

The ladies, too (bless their hearts!) what do they care whether my Lord Delafalte's bay colt Dauntless or Mr. M'Cleverley's Ratcatcher is first past the winning-post? whether orange and blue sleeves or white and yellow be the first to catch the judge's eye? It is true they bet ferociously, and the contents of Jouvin's glove shop are transferred with the fate of the Derby; but then the darlings are on the safe side. Catch a woman paying a bet, or neglecting to remind you if she happen to be the winner. Pater-familias, with a family of pretty daughters launched in good society, cannot do better than charter a barouche for the Derby day. Even if he add to it a hamper from F. and M.'s, and a case or so of champagne, the gloves won by the ladies will represent a considerable saving at the end of a year. And then the hearty way in which the dear creatures positively drink their champagne: they do not nip at it like birds drinking out of their water trough, taking only a bead as a mouthful. At the Derby every-

thing is permissible, even to a lady dipping her Grecian beak into a pot of heavy ! and the hearty way in which they dispose of the pigeon pie and lobster salad is quite refreshing, and removes the notion that our young ladies are ethereal beings, dining on a butterfly's wing, when you happen to meet them at Thompson's or Jobson's hospitable board.

I think we have to thank Mr. Leech for doing away with this among the thousand other social humbugs he has as-sailed. It would be absurd to suppose that those plump young ladies in the tightest of riding habits and most bewitching of hats are innocent of honest beef, mayhap of beer; and the heartfelt gratitude of materfamilias with the large family of daughters is due to our talented artist, for inducing our young men to believe that those blushing beings in crinoline and book-muslin are real flesh and blood, amenable with themselves to the delicious influences of hunger. It is wonderful what an effect this has on young men; for, after all, the way to the heart is through the stomach.

But there is one other class to whom the Derby is fraught with peculiar fascination—I allude to those green young gentlemen who fancy themselves uncommonly sharp fellows, and come out alarmingly every Derby day. For them the blue bird's-eye scarf with the horseshoe pin was invented; for them that abomination, the single-breasted green cut-away coat, is still retained on the tailor's books of fashion; for these gentlemen dress the sportsman, and fancy this will be an infallible way of winning money. Another indispensable item is a racing opera-glass slung across their shoulders, which in nine cases out of ten is cut away before they return home. These misguided individuals are the legitimate prey of the professional betting-man, who, like poets, is born, not made. No style of dress will bring with it that peculiar talent which enables turfmen to make a tidy living by betting; nor can it be said that they have bought experience, for they rarely have any money which they could lay out for that valuable commodity.

Of the first class Charles Dashwood was a good specimen; of the second, Mr. Leggitt. They were both imbued with the same honest principles, which in Mr. Leggitt had so far degenerated that, if luck were perverse, he would be quite ready to levant, till some combination enabled him to pay off his encumbrances, while Charles would have been horror-struck at the notion of owing any play debts, and

would never rest till he had paid them. By some mental obliquity, however, he never thought about his tradesmen's bills; they might wait and take their chance. It is curious what a narrow line society is disposed to draw between the two; but I am glad to find that the practicality of the age is producing a good effect. It is no longer thought a feather in a man's cap to swindle a tradesman, and society shuns shy of gentlemen who have spent a portion of their very ephemeral existence in the Queen's Bench. I do not think that an epitaph to the effect that Lord Bolter lies buried here, "deeply regretted by his numerous creditors," would at the present time produce any other feeling than one of disgust.

But I cannot say that Mr. Leggitt was to be blamed for these ideas; his obliquity was the product of his education. Brought up in a racing stable, and eminent as a light-weight rider, he had at an early age been initiated in all the foul devices which disgrace our national institution. When fat grew upon him, and he was no longer able to play his distinguished part in the pigskin, some noblemen patronised him, and employed him as a commission agent. Tattersall's did not improve his morality, and the numerous defaulters whom he found cursed as swindlers when they bolted, and greeted as paragons of honour when they returned to pay their bets, soon blunted his moral feeling. Not that he was not as honest as before: he would not have wronged a noble client of a shilling; but he began to grow dissatisfied with his position, and wanted to make a fortune at a single blow. The betting-office scheme occurred to him, and with Charley's assistance he had carried it out. The knowledge he had acquired through his apprenticeship served him in good stead, and he was in a fair way of gaining a large stake. Only one horse, Bloodsucker, now at twenty-five to one, appeared dangerous, and he intended to employ Charley to make him safe on that score; so under the best possible auspices they started in a hired barouche to be present at the memorable Derby.

Who has not once in his life enjoyed that extraordinary sight presented by the "road" on a Derby day? Some old laudator temporis acti may shake his venerable head at the railway, and say that the road is nothing compared to what it was in his time; but I do not believe him. I cannot conceive how more vehicles could be collected; when a triple file of carriages is moving slowly along in one direction, and being checked at intervals by a playful horse jibbing right

across the toll-bar, I do not see where there would be room for more. I am willing to concede to old Grumbleton that the character of the machines has fallen off; donkey carts and trucks may have usurped, to a great extent, the place of the four-in-hand drags; but, on the other hand, the fun has increased in an equal ratio. The solemn swells whose whole mind was in the ribbons, and who would have broken their hearts at any clumsy locking of a wheel, have given up the road; but I do not regard that as any peculiar loss. There are plenty of four-in-hands still to be seen, and, what is better far, filled with jolly men and women, who are determined to make a holiday of it, and have a perennial tap of porter at each end of the van. It is true that now and then, on their return, they set light to the straw at the oottom, and succeed in burning some one to death; but even that, as a practical joke, they have probably learned from their betters, who considered it an exquisite lark to throw bags of flour and rotten eggs at the passers by. At any rate, they do not break their word of honour as officers and gentlemen, to escape a very well-merited chastisement.

Be this as it may, Charles Dashwood was in no humour to be critical. He had never been to the Derby before by road, and there was abundant material for amusement. All along pleasant Mitcham the gardens were thronged with pretty servant girls, who had mounted new caps for the occasion, and unaccountably thrust themselves in the way of the chaffing and jokes. Every public-house was beset by thirsty souls, who insisted on all being served first, and rendered confusion worse confounded. Here and there a trap had broken down, and the unhappy owner had to endure not only his own disappointment, but the unextinguishable laughter of all the passers by. Then sturdy men trudged along the footpath, carrying their coats slung on a stick, and invulnerable to remarks. They were determined to see the race, and it was a matter of perfect indifference to them what people said about their preference to walk. At intervals a fierce combat would be taking place between irate costermongers and grooms, who were attempting to remove the donkey-dragged truck out of the way of their noble masters, and were generally ignominiously defeated; for during our saturnalia the strongest spirit of republicanism prevails, and our Helots are equal to our patres conscripti.

Then came that interminable pull up the hill on to the course, which is the stumblingblock to so many gallant steeds, and causing the services of innumerable cads to be

enlisted to force the vehicle up the ascent. Then the confusion on the course—the brushing down and boot-cleaning—the champagne at Careless's to wash the dust down—the walk to the paddock to inspect the horses—the welkin-rending shouts in the ring—the magnificent array of gaily dressed ladies in the grand stand, the sun the while shining as it only can on a Derby day—the double lines of carriages thronged with laughing, chatting, merry beings—the row of countless spectators, extending from the corner past the winning-post, standing patiently for hours to see the horses flash past, and shout the name of the winner—all this is a wonderful sight, and gives a foreigner an idea of England as it is. What hope could the most red of republicans have of inciting a revolution among a set of beings who shook their fetters so gladly? I remember once hearing the great Caussidière say that a people which thus forgot the pressure of taxation in child's play was unworthy of liberty. Certainly, I agree with him, unworthy of liberty as he regarded it, but most worthy of that freedom which brings the highest and the lowest together for one day in the year, and gives the poorest mechanic an opportunity of resting from his toil.

Along the road Mr. Leggitt was unaccountably nervous, and impressed on Charley the necessity of making Bloodsucker safe. He had spent the previous night in reckoning up his liabilities, and was startled at finding how much he stood to lose on that horse. Still he could not have avoided it. During the winter Bloodsucker had been first favourite for the Derby; and Leggitt, true to his principle of betting all round, had laid against him to a considerable extent. He had been first favourite for the "two thousand," and had come in last but one; and so far Mr. Leggitt was safe. Since that period the public had neglected the horse almost entirely, and in the betting ring he was nearly forgotten. He now stood at twenty-five to one; and, to make assurance doubly sure, Mr. Leggitt determined on putting £300 upon him, which would insure him against all accidents.

"So Charley, my boy, you see," he wound up his exhortation, "I want you to back Bloodsucker for two hundred on the quiet; you'll be able to get long odds, and then any way we stand to win a couple of thousand."

How could Charley be otherwise than delighted at such prospects? He felt certain that he had now hit upon the right track to fortune, and would soon gain sufficient to set

him up, in the teeth of Mr. Amos. With these pleasing notions he paid very little attention to the loss of his watch, which was very cleverly conjured out of his pocket by some gentleman, whose dexterity would render him a famous successor to Professor Anderson. He made his way to the betting ring in search of Fitzspavin, and at length found that worthy gentleman with his favourite prize-fighter, busily engaged in laying odds apparently about everything.

"Well, Fitzspavin, how do you stand about Blood-sucker?"

"Oh! I am open. Are you sweet upon him?"

"Well, I don't mind backing him for a hundred, if you like, at twenty-fives."

"Can't do it, my boy; not a point more than twenty-two If that suits your book I'm your man."

"Well, suppose we say twenty-twos, I am willing."

"I can accommodate the gent at the same terms, if he's agreeable," added Mr. Knuckles, the prize-fighter, addressing no one in particular, but looking fixedly at a stray dog.

"Done with you," said Charles; and the bets were duly entered.

By this time preparations were being made for the great event, and the police commencing their apparently hopeless task of clearing the course. It seemed as if the attempted rushes of the serried phalanx would be about as useful as throwing an India-rubber ball against the walls of Sevastopol; but that wondrous respect the English entertain for the law, as personified in an individual wearing a number, asserted its sway here. In an incredibly short space of time the throng was separated and impelled under the barriers on either side, and the police followed up their victory by pouncing on everybody who ventured to break the line. At last not a soul was visible, and the preliminary race took place with that historic dog who rushes down the course, pursued by ten thousand yells, and disappears the Lord knows where. I have studied that dog carefully, and the only solution I can offer is that he is a monomaniac, bitten by a desire for notoriety. If it be so, he certainly meets with decided success, for never does a dog create such a sensation on any other occasion.

The horses cantered past, led by the old gentleman in the red coat, whose hunting days must be long gone, and who only mounts the coat as a mark of distinction, and Blood-sucker looked in such blooming condition that Charley was very glad he had succeeded in hedging to so large an

amount. Then came the marshalling in line; the repeated false starts, raising the popular excitement to the highest pitch; then the cry running along the line like a platoon fire, "They're off, they're off!" the strained expectation, every neck seeming to grow doubly long, as the mob laid over the rail, striving to catch the first glance of the horses as they came round the corner; then the shouts, "Dulcimer wins!" "No, it's Heretic!" "Bloodsucker is coming up!" Along the horses flew, maddened by the shouts and the fearful spurs. In a second they were past the winning-post, the first two so close that it seemed impossible to decide which had won. But the judge soon put an end to the suspense by placarding No. 18, and many an anxious glance at the card proved that "Bloodsucker" had gained for his owner the "blue ribbon" of the Derby.

No end to the popping of champagne corks and unpacking of hampers: dire the annoyance of finding the pickle-jar broken into the cherry tart, and the pigeon pie improved by the vinegar rendering it a pulp: no matter whether salad dressing were forgotten, or no glasses present to drink from—such are mere trifles on a Derby day. Even the man who has lost thousands does not lose his appetite, and no thoughts of Black Tuesday are allowed to cross his mind. To-day must be devoted exclusively to mirth—repentance may come to-morrow. Then, the Oaks give a chance of retrieval: all is not lost yet; so hang care, and, devil take you, the bottle's empty.

It was, indeed, a glorious time for the Zingari, who appear to have a patent as scavengers of the course. I have visited Epsom a week after the festival, and have not found so much as a bone left to indicate the great gobbling place of the nation. Not that the gipsies confine their attention to broken meat and empty bottles; but it is one of their functions to act as human vultures, clearing away the garbage. Under the pretence of fortune-telling they whipped away many a valuable shawl, and displayed their taste for jewellery by stealing watches and brooches; but that is one of the penalties you must pay for going to the Derby, and is generally regarded in a most philosophic spirit. The second column of the *Times* is a perfect study for a week after the races. I wonder whether any of the victims ever do get their watches back, or whether the advertisement is only throwing good money after bad.

Charles did not pause to look at any of the countless amusements which would otherwise have stopped him, so anxious

was he to find Leggitt, and congratulate him of their success. But in vain he searched for him in the ring and through the grand stand, and at length was going to give him up in despair, when he saw him emerging from a small booth, with a pot of porter in his hand.

"Ah, Charley, my boy, that's a queer lot, ain't it? I'm afraid it's all up with Mr. Thomas Leggitt. Well, hang care, who's afraid? I looks towards you. Never say die. Fol di rol!"

[Which was Mr. Leggitt's peculiar method of indicating his sorrow, and proving there was life in the old horse yet.]

"Nonsense, man! Don't you know I've won £4,400?"

"I know all about it, and a little more than you do. You have won £2,200 from Mr. Fitzspavin; ditto from Mr. Knuckles. I only hope you may get it. Here's luck!"

"What's the matter, Leggitt? I never saw you like this before."

"The matter is this, my boy. Mr. Fitzspavin has lost £40,000, and won't pay so many pence. Mr. Knuckles was his confederate, and between them they tried to boil a very pretty pot, which has put the fire out. Mr. Fitzspavin is by this time on his road to London, and I suppose to-night will be in Paris, while Mr. Knuckles will go for a professional tour in the provinces."

Here was a sudden blow. All poor Charley's air-built castles had collapsed, and he was worse off than ever. His looks plainly betrayed his feelings, and so Leggitt took compassion on him.

"Here, my boy, have a drain. You were a good friend to me when I wanted one, and sha'n't be a loser. Nobody knows you had anything to do with the betting-office. Here's your bill and the seventy skiv you advanced. Hang it all, Thomas Leggitt may be a rogue through the pressure of circumstances, but it sha'n't be said he ever robbed a friend."

"No, no, that won't do, Leggitt; I can't take the money back. You'll want it yourself, and I deserve to be a loser."

"You're a young ass, and don't know what you're talking about: I sha'n't be any loser by the affair. I must shut up shop for the present; but I shall see if I can't get some money from my brother to stave off ruin. P'raps he'll come forward this time and help me; if not, I'm off to Paris, and, if I catch Mr. Fitzspavin, I'll try if I can't thrash some of the money out of his honourable carcass."

No persuasion on Charley's part could induce this strange

mixture of good and evil to touch a penny of the money, and so, after another pot of porter, they parted. Charles then had to undergo the pleasing punishment of studying his own private betting-book, and found that he had admirably contrived to lose £400, which must be met by next Tuesday, if he wished to keep his good name. But he quite made up his mind not to touch gambling any more, for he now saw that, though he might be sharp himself, he had found a sharper in Mr. Fitzspavin, and the best way would be to pay the money at once, and have done with the turf for ever. But how? That was the difficulty. The only hope seemed to be in mortgaging the reversion again, and so raising the money. He would not go to Mr. Amos; shame prevented him applying to Mr. Short, when suddenly he remembered an address Leggitt had given him of a city lawyer, whom he described as an honest man.

To this gentleman he determined to apply the very next day, and, heartily sick of the Derby, he returned to town in solitary grandeur, and vented his spite by giving a tremendous thrashing to an unhappy lawyer's clerk who dared to insult his majesty by throwing a bag of flour at his hat.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ROAD TO RUIN.

MR. EBENEZER CANTOR was a very different sort of attorney from those whom Charley had hitherto met with. Dressed in a shabby suit of professional black and a ropy white choker, he sat in a dingy office in a back lane of the city at the receipt of custom. He was highly respected and respectable in the pleasant haunts of Clapham, and his fame had extended to sober Streatham, where he had speculated successfully in building various "Ebenezers" for the welfare of his fellow-men and the glorification of his own name. He was addicted to the use of "thou" in his conversation, and affected the word "carnal," which he applied to the most heterogeneous subjects. As a general rule avoid such men.

Mr. Cantor listened placidly as Charley unfolded his

tale, and did not interrupt him once. When possessed of the whole facts he said solemnly,—

“ My Christian friend, thou hast fallen into the hands of Philistines who have shorn thee; ay, verily, as Dalilah cut the hair of Samson. It is fortunate for thee that thou hast now met with a professing Christian, who will regard thy interests as his own. It beseemeth me not to glorify myself; but thou wouldest do right to indict the sinful Mr. Sharpe, who is a disgrace to the honourable profession of which I am a member. And thou sayest that thou requirest £400, and that quickly, to pay moneys lost in the carnal pursuit of horse-racing. My principles will not allow me to advance the money, which, had it been intended for some holy object, I would gladly have done at a low rate of interest, for I am not of those who prey on the fatherless.”

“ Then I am afraid, Mr. Cantor, I must go elsewhere, for the money I must have by Monday at latest; so good morning.”

“ Stay, young friend; methinks thou art impetuous. Oh, curb thy sinful nature! Hadst thou not been so eager, I would have added that I have a worldly client who is willing to lend out moneys; but, alas! he indulgeth in usury, and I fear that he will not let thee have the money, supposing the security be good, under thirty per cent. Of a verity it grieveth me to be mixed up in such carnal transactions, but the interests of my family compel me to do much which is most repugnant to my Christian feelings.”

“ Oh! I have no objection to pay thirty per cent. if I can have the money to-morrow.”

“ Well, then, my young friend, if thou wilt leave the requisite documents I will inspect them, and, if satisfactory, I will have a mortgage deed drawn up. Call thou to-morrow at the hour of twelve, and the answer or the money shall await thee.”

Mr. Cantor's worldly client appeared satisfied with the security, for he expressed no unwillingness to advance £400, in consideration of a further mortgage of £520 on the reversion, and the additional security of three months' bills. Charles, driven into a corner as he was, had no alternative but to consent to the exorbitant terms, and, leaving instructions with Mr. Cantor that he should look out for a purchaser for the reversion, he went to pay off all claims upon him, and patiently awaited the end.

But the sale of the reversion went on very slowly. Several insurance offices nibbled at it, until one clever accountant detected apparently a fatal flaw in old Sir Amyas's will. It seemed that worthy man had left the £5000, then in Bank stock, to pay £250 *per annum* for life to his eldest son, not dreaming that our government would ever be forced into the necessity of reducing the interest. It then became a question, on the discovery of this clause, whether Sir Amyas Dashwood might not lay claim to have his income brought up to that amount out of the capital, and demand the payment of back stoppages at the same time. This was a glorious bone of contention for the lawyers, and the "Dashwood reversion" was quoted in every counsel's chambers. Guineas unnumbered were paid out of Charles's pocket to settle this moot point, and the counsel were fairly divided on the subject. In the meantime the bills for the £400 had to be renewed at a further expense of £50, and I think Charles is fairly started on the road to ruin. All this while, however, Mr. Cantor neglected no opportunity to impart holy teaching to his young client, whom he regarded in the light of a recreant, and would gladly have called back to the right path. But Charley, from his Oxford education, had a most hearty detestation of all chapels, which he profanely called "schism shops," and could not be induced to enter "Ebenezer," though he had no objection to dine at Mr. Cantor's on Sundays, and indulge in his splendid old port, which that worthy gentleman regarded as a carnal delectation, but still comforting to the inner man.

While the debatable land of law was being fought inch by inch by the several counsel engaged on the Dashwood reversion, Mr. Cantor occupied himself by looking out for a possible purchaser. Charles growing impatient, the lawyer suggested that he would purchase the reversion at all risks, and offered him £1,700, which he declared was the fair market value between man and man. Charles was inclined to accept this offer, much beneath his expectation though it was; but he learned a fact which threw light on Mr. Cantor's offer, and made him regard that gentleman's religious motives as somewhat suspicious. The news, namely, had arrived in England that Sir Amyas was dangerously ill, and the reversion jumped up in value £200 at once. Still the knotty point was not decided by the lawyers, who most impartially enlisted themselves in the opposing bands, and there seemed no chance of obtaining a decided verdict, ex-

cept by throwing the property into chancery, which the Lord forbid, even to my enemies.

At last one fine day Mr. Cantor announced, with great inward satisfaction, that he had succeeded in procuring a bona fide purchaser, prepared to buy the reversion for £2,000, on condition that Charles should give a guarantee that he would repay the difference in the event of the question ever being brought before a court of law, and decided in Sir Amyas's favour. In somewhere about three weeks the necessary indentures were drawn up, notice given to the several mortgagees, and the tedious business appeared destined to reach a satisfactory conclusion at last.

As everything now-a-days is done by companies, so Charles Dashwood's reversion was purchased by a great city lawyer, and otherwise very little man, acting on behalf of the Friends of Humanity Insurance Company. As this worthy gentleman happened to be a doorkeeper, or something of that sort, at the Clerkenwell Sessions, he ordered the business to be transacted in his private room, where the parties were summoned. Of course, being in an official capacity, Mr. Pincer could not be expected to act as a gentleman; so Charles need not have felt surprised at his keeping on his hat during the whole of the interview, and, in consideration of his gown, showing off most unwarrantable airs. But then Mr. Pincer was a true blue democrat; that is to say, he bullied everybody whom accident placed in his power, and licked the dust off the boots of those above him, and by this simple process he had got on in the world, and tried to get into parliament once on the religious interest. Fortunately for the reporters the townsfolk had too much sense to return him, and he sank into his nothingness again. I sincerely pitied his clerks for the fortnight after his defeat.

In the city, however, Mr. Pincer was a wonderful man, and made very nice pickings indeed out of the various companies with which he was connected. He had the permission to address the lord mayor during his tenure of office as plain Mr., and generally went in for the corporation being a humbug. Soon after he was elected a Deputy to stop his croaking, and since then he has become a stanch defender of the most grievous abuses of the turtle-breeding institution. In person Mr. Pincer was not agreeable to look upon: he gave you the idea of a red-haired bulldog, whose temper prevented his picking up any flesh. When in an official capacity he gave rise to another

zoological comparison by resembling a pouter, as he strutted about with his huge frill, and fancied himself no end of a fellow. He had obtained a great reputation as being charitably disposed ; but then it was always at other people's expense I do not know any instance of his giving away a shilling of his own ; but, on the other hand, he was a great card at distributing advice and tracts *gratis*. As Mr. Cantor found his only hope of salvation in Ebenezer, so Mr. Pincer held on fast by Salem ; and they were as pretty a pair of hypocrites as could be met with in London. But Mr. Cantor had this advantage over his religious brother : I have known him give away a penny to a beggar when anybody was looking on, while Mr. Pincer never carried coppers, but ballasted himself with a large stock of soup tickets.

This dread functionary scowled preternaturally when Charles stared at his fixed hat and returned the compliment by putting on his own again—and I have no doubt, although a godly man, would have willingly handed Charles over to the tender mercies of the common wheel for his insolence ; but my hero amused himself by a steady look at the little man, and a mental vow that he would kick him whenever he met him in a dark lane, and they proceeded to business.

The deeds being signed, Mr. Pincer drew cheques for the amounts due to the first mortgagees, which he handed over to their representatives. At first he was sorely indignant that Mr. Amos had not made his appearance to swell his official triumph, and hinted at deferring the business till that gentleman's arrival ; but some judiciously applied flattery soothed his ruffled feelings. Mr. Cantor then received a cheque for the balance, and they walked out of the room ; while Mr. Pincer proceeded to lunch with the lord mayor, and consoled himself for late rebuffs by abusing in a godly manner an unfortunate footman.

Mr. Cantor suggested that Charles should call the next morning at twelve, when they would run over his little bill and arrange matters, and to this, of course, my hero had no objection. When he called, however, he could not find Mr. Cantor in the way, and the next time he went the office was closed. All doubt as to the reason was dispelled by the next *Gazette*, in which Mr. Cantor's name figured prominently as a bankrupt, and on the first page of the *Times* was an advertisement, offering a reward of £100 to any one who would deliver him over to the nearest

police station, as he was "wanted" for various offences, among them being forgery to a large extent.

It was too true: Mr. Cantor had bolted with a serious governess, who had been educating his family, and had carried off Charles's small store of wealth as a *viaticum*. I do not pretend to assert that he bolted merely for the sake of getting possession of that money; but he would have to fly in the shortest possible time, and he thought he might as well take this money with him. He succeeded in escaping to America, and is now a celebrated preacher and large slave-holder, to whom he delivers weekly sermons on the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," and the audacious robberies committed by the darkies are the only canker which preys upon his mind.

This was certainly remarkably pleasant for my friend Charles, for he had just £25 left to begin the world upon. He would be enabled to pay his debts by the sale of his furniture and jewellery, and that was all. What he was to do he could not imagine. I will allow that many men have begun the world ere now with hardly so many pence as my hero had pounds; but they had been educated in the hard school of adversity, and were prepared to rough it, in the certainty that their energy would lead them to a colossal fortune, and the end has frequently justified them. But with Charles the case was very different: he was quite unfitted by education for any single profession or trade. The only prospect he had was in turning author, and even to that a man must serve a long apprenticeship before he can begin to earn enough to support him. The pen of a ready writer only moves so readily after long scouring over the paper, and ideas will not flow at starting one-half so rapidly as the ink.

But my hero was not aware of this: in his magnificent notions of his own ability, he felt no doubt that he need only write a book to make a large sum by it. Hence he did not feel any great apprehension about the future, and, remembering the fabulous sums he had heard were paid to celebrated authors, he thought, very naturally, he would soon be in a position to lay down his terms to the publishing world, who would run after him, and outbid each other to gain possession of his manuscripts. Poor fellow! he was very much in the position of a young bear with all his troubles to come. Still it will do him no harm to have some of the conceit knocked out of him, to quote Sir Joseph Paxton's celebrated remark. I believe that Charley will yet emerge

triumphantly from his difficulties, for adversity is a valuable friend and adviser. (What a horrid temptation assailed me to quote the lines beginning, "Sweet are," &c.! but I forbear out of consideration to my readers.)

The sale of the furniture was the first step Charley took to meet his position boldly, and an advertisement in the *Times* soon produced a purchaser in the shape of a young gentleman just commencing his travels about town. The amount produced was more than sufficient to pay the debts, and Charles was at liberty to resign his valuable position as man about town. He felt some natural regret at giving up his comfortable chambers, and fancied he would be missed. Poor fellow! the gap he made in the great circle of self was imperceptible, and filled up spontaneously. Just as if the habitués of the Haymarket cared who joined them, or who left their ranks, so long as they were not annoyed!

The next thing Charles had to arrange was where he should take up his abode, now that the West End was to know him no more. At first he thought of the dark streets leading off the Strand; but he wished to be out of temptation, and the billiard-room was in dangerous proximity. Still undecided, he hit on the next best scheme—he would dine. Regard being had to the state of his finances, he shunned Simpson's, and decided on the Cheshire Cheese, the great house of call for those pressmen who are in the habit of keeping their expenses within their income.

The Cheshire Cheese is the funniest place imaginable. It is situated in a gloomy court running out of Fleet Street, which you may pass twenty times without noticing, so close a resemblance does it bear to its brother courts. But these narrow passages are well known to literary men as the lurking places of printers, and a congeniality of feeling has been produced on behalf of Wine-office Court and the Cheshire Cheese. There is a slight affectation about the coffee-room—you have wooden-handled knives and forks, as if you were going back at one bound to the days of Dr. Johnson; but, on the other hand, the chops and steaks are irreproachable, and in winter they serve up a huge rump-steak pudding, such as you have only dreamed of before. Another favourable feature is a marvellous compound called arrack, or rack, I do not exactly know which—a most insidious beverage, which slips down your throat so rapidly, that you find yourself on a fair way to be intoxicated

when you get up from your chair, although you have been fancying yourself as sober as a judge all the while.

But Charley had selected this hostelry not out of any particular desire for mutton chops, but because he hoped to meet his friend Vicary, whom he would consult about his future prospects. As he expected, he found that gentleman calmly demolishing his dinner, and not at all disposed for conversation until that solemn sacrifice was consummated; but, with a tumbler of cold punch before him, he graciously consented to listen.

"Well, Dashwood," he then said, "I am truly sorry for you. I do not think you will like a literary life, nor are you fit for it. It's a very poor crutch, you may depend upon it. If I had the chance I would cut it to-morrow, and I know plenty more successful men who feel the same. It's a thankless office to be at the beck and call of publishers; and, as for independence, you might as well hope to evade death or the tax-collector."

"Well, but, Vicary, I understood from you that you made £300 a year. Surely a man can put up with a loss of dignity for that."

"Well, so I do. I have £4 a week from the *Fly-blown*, but the confounded editor dares to cut my articles about. I have often threatened to throw it up, but I don't want to ruin the paper; and, if it was not for my articles, I don't know who'd read the bosh Scraper puts in. Then I pick up a few pounds here and there from periodicals, and altogether have plenty of money; but what's the use of it? I wanted to go up the Rhine this summer, and can't get away. Devil take newspaper work, I say!"

It seems rather surprising that Mr. Vicary should indulge in such abuse of a profession to which he owed his livelihood, but I can assure my readers he is not an isolated instance. As a rule, the more money a literary man makes the more he grumbles, and, while his work is the lightest possible, when he has once secured a position, he never can be brought to believe but that he is shamefully underpaid.

"Well," said my hero, "I only wish I could earn one-half the money, and I should be satisfied. Is there any chance of getting an appointment on a paper at present? I would gladly turn my hand to it."

"Get on a paper? Well, I like your impudence. Do know, sir, that by the last return there are eighteen

hundred and seventy-seven Irishmen howling for engagements, and all, according to their own statement, promised six deep, from the *Times* down to *Paul Pry*? I had to wait five years before I got my own berth, and then it was only because my father stipulated for it on his giving up the editorship of the *Flyblow*. Besides, what claim have you? None of your family ever belonged to the literary world; and I regard it as a precious piece of impertinence for you to think of getting on a paper."

"Well, well, you needn't grow excited; I only asked for advice, not for abuse. What shall I do—write a novel? I think I could manage that."

"That's more in your line; or do something for periodicals; but you must expect to live two years on air till you have established your name. Publishers won't take up an unknown man unless they are sure of making money, and the only way they can do that is by giving nothing for copyright. And they cannot be blamed for it: there's a parcel of foolish women not able to sew, who spend their time in blotting paper, and are only too glad to get their trash published, without having the face to ask for payment. In many cases they will find the money towards printing expenses. Go down to the seaside and run over a circulating library, and then ask yourself whether any man in ~~the~~ senses would pay anything for the mass of rubbish congregated on the shelves. And it stands to reason that if an idle public must be supplied with literary *pabulum*, and does not care of what it consists, a publisher will not pay for copyrights, if he can fill three post octavo volumes for nothing. The system's bad, sir."

"Well, you give me Job's comfort certainly. I can't get on a paper; I mustn't write novels; so tell me what I can do to gain a living."

"Find a new neighbourhood and establish a crossing—that will be a great deal more respectable, and save you a considerable amount of heart burning; but, if you are determined to follow your bias, you had better come with me to-night to the 'Aristarchus.' I will introduce you to some men, and you will hear some good advice, on condition that you hold your tongue. No one is allowed to address the meeting unless he has gained recognition as an author. You needn't bother about looking for lodgings to-night; I'll give you a sofa, and it will be late before we turn in. To-morrow we'll talk the matter over at breakfast, and if you still hold to your present views I'll see what I can

do for you. And now let's sink the shop. What do you say to another go of vanity?"

And thus the hours slipped away in pleasant converse about operatic matters and various amusing topics, until the time arrived to go to the "Aristarchus" club. Mr. Vicary was rather lurchy, but the liquor had made no impression on his head, except that he was more sarcastic than ever, and more disposed to warn Charley off the literary manor. But I cannot feel angry with him: the dog in the manger principle prevailing in literature has been produced by extraneous causes, for which the distinguished professors cannot be blamed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE "ARISTARCHUS."

It is an amusing instance of the unanimity existing among literary men, that hitherto they have remained unrepresented in club life. It is true that one fraction belongs to the Athenæum, dull and dear; another to the Whittington, cheap and nasty. But the fact is that most literary men regard their working life as authors merely as a passage to something better—a government appointment of £800 a year, say, or some snug berth in an insurance office. Hence they take no peculiar pride in their profession, and pay no attention to those arrangements by which the other professors obtain a local habitation and a name in our busy metropolis.

Nor do I think that the proposition of the reform party is feasible, namely, that the halls of the Literary Society should be redeemed from their present vacuousness, and converted into a huge caravansarai, or house of call for writers. Though fully appreciating the merits of the republic in which we penologists live and have our being, and allowing that we are all equal in the sight of the public, ability alone enabling one man to make his £5000 a year, another his £500, still I arrogate to myself the right of choosing my company, and I should not desire to be hail fellow well met with Mr. O'Rourke, who has just entered the club, or whatever it may be called, after a lengthened course of accident hunting, and smelling strongly of the gin

and water, by means of which he has kept his system up. Nor, on the other hand, if Professor Fribble were to make his appearance at night (which I very much doubt), would he condescend to associate with a humble scribe like myself, who is not yet able to give that Fribble a champagne supper as a return for his kind patronage. Theoretically there may exist a republic of letters, then; but practically it is an oligarchy, where coteries try to gain the upper hand, and lay down the law for the plebs. Guilds and institutes will be attempted repeatedly, and fail, for there is no possibility of cohesiveness among such slippery elements.

Still, I would not have it believed that there is not a strong feeling of clanship among authors; but they prefer establishing small coteries of intimates, whom habits and association render meet comrades. Of such nature was the "Aristarchus," got up by a parcel of clever young men, far too lazy to work hard, and gain a great name, but to be depended on when any pretender required demolishing. To it belonged the critics of several weekly papers, and it is wonderful what varied information they obtained when any new book was brought under their notice. Woe be to the unhappy plagiarist who dared to pick other men's brains, and pass off the plunder as his own: half an hour's quiet coufab at the "Aris" soon settled him, and next Saturday ne was gibbeted for public scorn. It was well understood that the remarks made went into the common stock, and could be used without jealousy by anybody, and there was a glorious unanimity among the members when they had an opportunity of belabouring any impudent poet, who dared to take another man's thoughts, and tried to conceal them in the gaudy trappings of his own ill-regulated style.

Nor was it merely for this purpose that the members collected every Wednesday evening; they had primarily formed the club for the purpose of improving the present state of the literary market, but I am afraid they will not succeed. They were sworn foes of publishers, and one-half of the scabreux stories which floated about London might be traced to their malicious interpretation of some very simple matter. When I add that they were all more or less of the Bohemian tribe, but very good fellows in spite of that, I think I have said enough of the "Aristarchus."

Vicary was received with a shout on entering the room with Charles, and a tall, good-looking man, with an intellectual head, called out, "Well, Vic, what news?"

"Oh! haven't you heard? Sir Bulwer Lytton is going to

bring a bill into the House that no publisher shall hereafter be allowed to set up, unless he can prove that he never learned to read. Fancy that fellow Belloc refusing my 'History of the Cad Genus,' and saying that my friends would consider it personal."

"Well, I fancy Belloc showed his taste," said another speaker, "for I think you said last week you pitched into the publishers as the cad par excellence."

"Well, and I paid them a high compliment to write about them at all; but I'll serve Belloc out for it. His books shall be cut up for the next six months."

"Well, I really don't think publishers are so much to be blamed," said another gentleman, evidently nervous and blushing at addressing so large an audience. "You must look at them in the light of tradesmen. Depend upon it, you would not have your books refused if Belloc saw his way to make money out of them. It is absurd to suppose that he would throw away a chance."

"Come, come, Desboro', no going over to the enemy. Of course Twentymans published your book because you are related to the Duke of Rougelion, and could date your preface from his castle," said Vicary savagely. "But tell us honestly what you got for it?"

"I got all I asked: half the profits were offered me, and I accepted them, on condition that my book should be brought out at once, instead of lying over till Christmas."

"And I suppose you'll tell us next that you have received some money on account?"

"Yes, I have. Not so much as I expected, certainly; but the publishers are not to be blamed because the public were blind to my merits."

"Oh, the innocent! There, don't say another word to-night, Desboro'. He published on half profits, gentlemen, and has actually received money on account. I vote he stands a bowl of punch at any rate."

"Talking of publishers, I heard a good story to-day," said Runciman, editor of the *Skirmisher*, a particularly caustic review. "One of your spasmodic poets, speculating on the high price those wares command, sent Belloc last week a manuscript poem, called 'Ajax defying the Lightning,' and modestly requested that a cheque for £800 should be forwarded by return of post, which, of course, Belloc did."

"Well," Vicary solemnly began, "I have heard a good deal this night against publishers, and I certainly blame

Belloes for refusing my book; but I have a still greater detestation for those confounded women, who cut us out entirely with their trash. Here's my friend Dashwood thinking of writing a novel—I call him ripe for Hanwell; but he persists in his notion, and fancies he is going to make money by it."

You may imagine how the company stared at my hero, thus suddenly introduced to their notice as a future littérateur. Still there was so much sympathy evinced for him—something of that sort which the Turks display toward a lunatic—that he took courage and expressed his views.

"My friend Vicary has just given us his opinion about women's books, and I cannot agree with him. We ought to remember that nine-tenths of the novel readers are women, and books must be written appealing to their feelings. Men do not understand how to describe the intricacies of a love affair, or touch those hidden chords which respond in a woman's heart. For instance, none but a woman could write 'Margaret Maitland.'"

"And none but a woman make such mistakes," added Runciman dryly. "But come, what do you say to 'Jane Eyre'?" Surely a man could have written that."

"I know that opinion was generally entertained by clever reviewers," Desboro' put in; "but the more you study that marvellous book the more convinced you must become that a woman wrote it. That dissection of the heart which 'Jane Eyre' evidences in every page is too delicate for a man's clumsy fist."

"And the only reason that made people fancy it was written by a man," added Charles, "was, in my opinion, that startling boldness which we only expected to find in French female writers. But then 'Jane Eyre' is quite exceptional, and hence can be read with equal interest and delight by all; and that, I take it, is the chief point to be studied. Men's books may display more thought and knowledge of the world, but they can only appeal to men, and hence generally prove failures."

"Well," said Vicary, "I still hold to my conviction. No chance of literature proving successful until women are ordered to mend stockings and sew on buttons, which is their natural destiny."

"And I only wish you could drive that into publishers," said Desboro', laughing; "but, at any rate, you must allow, Vic, that women don't condescend to such quackery as some of the gentlemen. They don't put literature on a level with

Holloway's pills, and, by dint of puffing and editions of two hundred and fifty, run up a worthless book to the tenth edition, and spend all the profits in advertising their own success."

"I think Mr. Dashwood is right," said Runciman after a pause. "Women are the best novelists after all; but they should stick to that, and not run off into history, and weave their own imagination into the story. It is so much easier to invent interesting incidents than pore for days over an old manuscript, trying to make out Anglo-French. And then, confound the jades, their books *sell*."

And Mr. Runciman, who had once perpetrated a "History of the Lord Lieutenants of Ireland," which was an utter *fiasco*, savagely gulped down his glass of toddy, and rang the bell for more.

The conversation here became general, and Desboro' began talking to my hero about a new magazine he was going to bring out on his own risk, called the *Dragon-fly*, in which he asked his co-operation. Charles, highly delighted at having made an engagement so speedily, jumped at the offer, and accepted an invitation to breakfast for the next Sunday, when they could talk the matter over. Runciman, too, with that peculiar knack of old writers to form acquaintance with young men—is it for the sake of acquiring at second hand some of their freshness of thought?—also followed Charley, and got into conversation with him.

"I like your theory about novel writers and novel readers, but I do not think it is quite correct. Male writers, when they take the pains, must far surpass anything of which a woman can be capable. Take the best woman's book and the best man's book, and contrast them—you will soon see the difference."

"True; but don't you think it is more easy for a woman to place herself on a level with the best of her class than it is for a man? I mean we might have many Mrs. Gores, but I hardly think we shall ever know more than one Thackeray."

"But, you see, you are merely talking of conventional novels—there I grant you right, though you have no reason to quote Thackeray as an instance. His books are not novels, but sermons garbed in a satirical form, worth more than one-half our pulpitiess. Ah! sermonising died out with old Latimer. But, as I was going to remark, you will find that women's novels, as a general rule, run in one beaten track—they are all about marrying and giving in marriage,

and the incidents refer to the crosses which run through the three volumes, to end in the usual consummation. What we want is a novel idea in novel writing—something out of the beaten track—if a novel were to begin with a marriage and end with a birth, only for a change."

"And yet that has been tried. Look at 'Ruth.' Who has not wept salt tears with that poor victim to her one great sin? and yet the impression the book produces is not that expected from a novel. Conventionalism is absolutely necessary for the success of a novel, and any heretic who dared depart from the great highway would be punished by not being read."

"I see, Mr. Dashwood, I shall not make you a convert to my theory, and I can only wish you all legitimate success on your path. But tell me, are you serious in turning to literature as a profession?"

"I certainly intended to try my 'prentice hand; but, from what my friend Vicary has let fall, I almost fear the trial."

"Oh, you must not mind him! His *bête noir* is a publisher; but I do not agree with him at all in his views. I have generally found publishers a very honourable and straightforward set of men, and, though our views do not always coincide, I think it but common justice to speak of them with respect. There are sharp hands among them certainly; but in these pushing days a man cannot get on without clever cuteness. But you may take it as a general rule that the man who abuses the publishers most virulently has just had a book refused by them. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*"

"Bravo, Runciman!" said Desboro', who had been listening attentively; "I am glad to find you coming round to my views. I always stuck up for the publishers; but methinks you were inconsistent last Wednesday, when you uttered such a fierce diatribe against Belloes."

"I am beginning to appreciate Belloes better since yesterday, my dear Desboro'."

"Why this sudden change?"

"Because yesterday Belloes was sufficiently alive to his own interest to offer me £500 for editing a new edition of De Thou's works, with notes and annotations."

"Poor Belloes!" said Desboro', with a very comical sigh, to Charles, as Runciman turned away; "that's one of the beauties of publishing: the *Skirmisher* is bribed to keep the peace for the next two years. Ah! they may say what

they like; but between authors and publishers there is not a pin to choose."

The room soon became crowded by men who came in from their night's work at the theatres and places of amusement, and fun became the order of the evening. Of course there was a considerable amount of eating and drinking, but that takes place whenever Englishmen congregate. But Charles was very much surprised at finding so little fun among a party of men who lived by their wits in the truest sense of the term. Perhaps they took good care to keep all their jokes to themselves for their own use, for I am sorry to say I have known many brilliant remarks appropriated and turned into guineas, much to the annoyance of the original owners.

It was growing very early when the party broke up, and Charles and Vicary started off in a Hansom for Camden Town, letting themselves into that gentleman's lodgings just as the early milkman began his matutinal round. They soon got off to sleep, and Charley began brilliantly dreaming about impossible successes, and had bright visions of his name advertised in every newspaper in connection with the new and highly successful novel. But his slumbers were speedily broken into by the thousand and one cries which pervade the streets of Camden Town so soon as the clerks have gone off to business. He made a descent into the kitchen, to the immense alarm of the maid of all work, and had a hearty sluice at the pump, which greatly refreshed him. Then he tried to wake Vicary; but, finding that a hopeless task, he went out and looked round for lodgings.

As may be supposed, there was no want of those all around, and it was, in fact, an embarrassment of choice. By the time he got back he found his friend up, and trying to make coffee with a patent French machine, which regularly exploded just at the point of fruition. Informing him of his difficulty, Vicary very simply solved it by telling him there was a bed to let in the house, and he could have half his sitting-room. The matter was speedily arranged, and Charles, fetching his traps, was soon enrolled in the honourable corps of *littérateurs*, though, for the present, forced to unwilling idleness.

He was very useful to Vicary in many ways, he was always willing to review books for him, although they generally disagreed, Vicary judging by the name of the author and publisher as to whether a book should be praised or

abused, while Charles desired to judge by its merits. However, Vicary, with his long practice, put in the plums, and was graciously pleased to express his satisfaction at the result.

At the breakfast to which Desboro' had invited my hero they had a long talk about the new magazine, which, however, Charles found, to his sorrow, was not to appear at present, but was apparently only a scheme floating about the young man's brain, and dependent on his attaining his majority. Runciman, who was also invited, strongly recommended Charles to try his hand at some magazine articles, and he went home full of hope, and still more certain of success.

But he was soon to be convinced that the literary hill could not be scaled without many heavy falls and failing breath. As might be expected, his articles were declined, and though he wrote and re-wrote them they were not up to the mark. At length he took leave of fiction, and turned to description, where he ought to have begun. A neat little sketch of a foot tour in Devonshire was accepted, and soon appeared in one of the periodicals, and Charles was to all intents and purposes an author. How proud he felt when he carried home the proof, not daring to intrust it to the post, and scarcely venturing to alter a word. How much prouder he felt when he was invited to call at the office and receive his *honorarium*—the first money he had ever earned in his life. No wonder he thought himself secure for the future, and magnificently asked half a dozen men to dinner, which made a deep hole in his payment. But what did he care for that? He had put his foot on the ladder at last, and it would not be his fault if he did not succeed.

Mr. Runciman, who was much amused with his earnestness (for it put him in mind of his own early days of bright hope, before he had sunk into the bitter critic and slaughterer of young aspirants to fame), really exerted himself in Charles's behalf. He gave him plenty of introductions to publishers, and even intrusted a portion of the great *De Thou* editing to his supervision. Then a new world broke upon Charles in his visits to the Museum Library, and he defied the celebrated headache, as he diligently followed up the trace, and made piles of extracts for the annotations. Mr. Runciman was glad to have such a valuable coadjutor at a price which no literary hack would have accepted, and pushed about until he had secured Charles a regular engagement on a cheap weekly periodical. The terms were

poor enough—but ten shillings a page, and no chance of doing more than three a week at the most; for pillaging the Americans was the principal editorial labour, and was much cheaper than original matter. Still, what with one thing and another, Charles was making enough to support himself, and worked away steadily at intervals on the novel to which he was to owe his fame.

I am glad that my hero is so respectably engaged, for I had grave doubts about him at first. I feared that his Oxford education would prove fatal to his success; but he has come out of the fire, pretty well singed it is true, but the sterling metal is beginning to be visible. With steadiness I have no fear of his ultimate recovery from the slough into which early habits and association had hurled him, and I am very glad to find he has left that horrible Haymarket for good. In fact, he found that racketing was incompatible with his present duties, and, although he enjoyed himself as well as usual, he indulged in none of those excesses which are ruinous alike to health and pocket.

We may, therefore, leave Charles Dashwood for the present, assured that he is on the right track at last, and beginning to feel that spirit of independence which animates every man who earns his livelihood, and is not a burden on his relations. Helen, too, is still living quietly at Gürkenhof, seeing more than ever of old Sir Amyas, who is beginning to take great interest in her. He is growing very feeble and pettish, but Helen has got over her first fright at his appearance. With her he is ever gentle, almost paternal. He makes up for this, however, by acting in a most unfatherly manner to his young heir, whom he will never admit into his presence, and altogether he is about as unhappy a man as could well be found.

And what of Mr. Worthington, my readers are heard asking? Has he died and made no sign? Let us go over the ocean and inquire.

CHAPTER XXX

ANTIPODES.

AT the period when young Worthington, with his family, determined on quitting old England to establish his penates in the antipodean land, the affairs of the colony were in anything but a blooming condition. Sheep farmers had struggled long and unsuccessfully against the rot and low prices, and were giving up that branch of trade, and seeking others which might turn out more profitably. This step was generally from bad to worse, and, after sacrificing their stock at an absurdly low price, they lost that money in equally absurd speculations. No wonder, then, that they looked gloomily on their new country, and many bitterly regretted that they had ever been fools enough to give up certainty at home for the insecure chance of making a fortune in Australia. Little did they foresee that within two years the marvellous discovery would take place to convert them all into gold-seekers, and send up the colony to an unprecedented pitch of factitious prosperity.

The very nature of Australia forbids that expansion which has done so much for North America. The limits of the settlement are designed by an inexorable law of necessity, and the hardiest pioneer turns with dismay from the gloomy scrub of the interior, which the sad fate of former explorers deters him from visiting. A huge belt of excellent soil surrounds the central valley, and it seems almost a certainty that the frontier line can never be carried further. Hence the future of Australia may be easily foretold: over-immigration will lead to discontent, and, so soon as the gold mania has faded away, the dissatisfied colonists will pack up their traps, and seek elsewhere that room for expansion which is denied them in their new home. The sad want of water will prove a bitter obstacle to the progress of the new country, and though railways may be constructed to supply the natural means of communication, history teaches us that every young country has owed its prosperity to the great water routes which can be employed at once and with slight outlay for the necessary barter. But probably before this takes place the other great colonisation

grounds will have been occupied, and Australia will find herself behind the world as much as she is now fancied to be before it. In the meanwhile English speculation does its best to *exploiter* the country, and by over-exportation restore things to their healthy and natural balance.

The Worthingtons safely arrived at Port Philip, and, after looking about them in considerable amazement at the new city which was to represent their metropolis, they sought an opportunity for getting up to Stapleton, and joining the old man; but this was not so easy to effect. Stapleton was certainly an outpost of civilisation, but was regarded more as a forlorn hope than anything else. The Port Philipers would be very glad to hear of its eventual success, and be proud to send up articles of trade there so soon as they found a market; but they had no idea of meeting Stapleton half way by making a road or facilitating the communication. They had quite enough to do in looking after themselves, and, in a fine Anglo Saxon spirit, preferred keeping the poor relation at bay. If he got on in the world, why, of course, they would willingly recognise him; but, till then, really they must be excused. Sneer at the Americans as much as you like, and abuse their institutions as you please—I will not say a word to stop you; but, at any rate, be so just as to give them credit for the practical fraternity they display, and the willingness with which they hold out a hand to a struggling neighbour. It may be that they feel confident of gaining cent. per cent. from the money they lay out in making roads and throwing open rivers; but I prefer to regard it as a proof of their enlightenment, and the common interest they feel in the welfare of their great fatherland.

The only mode, then, by which the Worthingtons could get up to their new home was by purchasing an ox team; but there was this obstacle—that they had not the money, and immediately James expressed a wish to negotiate a purchase the prices doubled at once. At last, however, they were relieved from their difficulties: they heard that a settler's team was going up some thirty miles beyond Stapleton, and succeeded in procuring a passage on condition that James would turn drover, and Jane perform the operations of head cook. Fortunately for her, there is no great conjuring required in cooking dampers and frying mutton chops, and she succeeded in satisfying the palates of her guests. But James was not nearly so successful in his department, and the new "mate" received many a

hearty curse for the stupid manner in which he managed the oxen. But it is not so pleasant for a cockney to be suddenly removed from his home, where he has probably never seen a cow save in Hyde Park, and has a belief that milk is a compound of industry made up of water, chalk, and bullocks' brains, and be set to manage some eight or ten fiery oxen, which display an insane desire to make the drover acquainted with the sharpness of their horns.

But the worst of all to James was driving in the hobbled team in the morning preparatory to starting. At first, where the scrub had undergone a pretence of clearing, it was not so bad; but when they reached the region of the giant gum trees, and it was necessary to track the cattle, poor James's difficulties commenced. With all the precautions he took he could not advance for five minutes without losing his way; and the track of the cattle was so crossed and intercrossed that at last he would sit down in utter despair, and bitterly regret leaving a country where he could not miss his way, and where, when he was tired, a 'bus was always within hail. After various attempts of this nature the stockman ignominiously degraded James from his duties, much to his gratification, and he was ordered to take double watch at night, and prevent any interesting savage from helping himself to the rum.

I am afraid that neither husband nor wife fully appreciated the signal honour of being thus intimately mixed up with a parcel of convicts. At home I rather fancy they would have declined associating with such gentry, and would have called in the police had any gentleman just released from Portland thrust his intimacy upon them. But here all was very different; the only company they had belonged to the convict class, and, take them altogether, they were not so bad as they are painted. For the first few days Jane had an uneasy apprehension, just as you might experience if you were shut up in a menagerie, and did not know at what moment the beasts would fall upon you. But this soon wore off; the intense reverence they paid her, and the love they showed for her children, roughly expressed though it was, touched her heart, and, to her great surprise, within a week she was quite on confidential terms with Baxter, the head man, who gave her many useful hints as to her future course of life.

One afternoon, when they had reached the very densest part of the scrub, and had made a station for the necessary purpose of dinner, Jane was fearfully startled by hearing

screams of distress at a short distance off. She naturally expected that the herdsmen would rush to the spot; but, to her regret, they coolly went on munching their dampers and talking in their unintelligible *argot*.

"Baxter," she said, "don't you hear that dreadful cry for help? Some one is in great trouble. Perhaps he has lost his way in this fearful brushwood. Go, I pray of you, at once to his assistance."

"Lord bless you, missis! that's an old fakement; it's only them bushrangers a trying to get us away from the team, that they may help themselves; but I don't mean to be caught by that chaff."

And Baxter began carefully examining his double-barreled gun, and warned the rest of the men to be on their guard, as an attack might be expected. The cries were renewed with still greater force, and Jane could not possibly believe that anybody could be so cruel as to cry in that way unless he had good reason. She felt very angry with Baxter for not going at least to see whether there was not some ground for the appeal, and all that gentleman's good-humoured chaff was unavailing to restore her to good humour. The caravan started again, and had just reached a natural clearing when all the men suddenly dodged behind gum trees and cocked their guns. I must except James, however, who had been amusing himself by watching a kangaroo, and was suddenly drawn from his researches in natural history by a sharp crack across the forehead, which brought him to the ground. Jane stared round her in amazement; she could not account for this sudden move; but a voice from the scrub soon enlightened her.

"Now, then, you Jim Baxter, it's no use humbugging; we're all clamping, and must have grub; so we mean to have a go in at your team. They're six of us; and so help me, we haven't tasted food for a week, 'cept a possum or so we killed, and that ain't fit food for a Christian anyways."

"Joe Bowles, I'm fly to your tricks; but you didn't ought to treat an old pal this way. You know I didn't peach on you when I had a chance of handing you over to the police, but kept you in my hut for three weeks stowed away till you could get round."

"I know it, I know it, Jim; you were a good friend to me, and I wouldn't trouble you now only we're starving, I tell you, and must have grub. If you like to give it to

us all the better, else we must take it, for we are desperate."

"Well, then, why didn't you stand forrad like men, instead of skulking behind them gums? God forbid you should starve, and, had you asked me for it, I would have given you food."

"I'll take your word, Jim; so we'll come out, and trust to your generosity."

With these words six wretched, woe-begone men burst from the thicket, and soon surrounded the team, which they surveyed with wolfish glances. They were all armed with rusty firelocks, which looked as if they would do more damage to the owners than any one else, and their long black beards imparted to them a character of ferocity which produced a very hearty burst of crying from baby. At the same time the stockmen also came out, and the treaty of amity was speedily signed. The rum passed from hand to hand, the cavendish was cut up, and pipes filled, while Jane received instructions from Baxter to cook an impossible number of mutton chops and dampers for the "poor devils," as he compassionately termed them.

In the meanwhile Mr. James Worthington recovered from his stupor, mainly through a tightness he felt over his throat, which threatened strangulation if he did not soon come to himself. When he woke up he found himself very artistically converted into a spread eagle between two gum trees, and his coat and cap absent without leave. But he was soon released by two ruffians, who apologised for ill-treating the "swell," through their ignorance that he was a friend of Jim's; and one of them made a bandage of green leaves, which he chewed into a pulp, and fastened across the ugly blow on our friend's forehead. Then they led him up to the team, when Baxter regarded him quizzingly, saying,—

"Well, mate, you've formed an acquaintance with our possums, have you? Hit precious hard, though, don't they? But, I say, you sir, just hand the swell back his coat, will you, or else you'll get no baccy, I tell you."

"Oh, in course, Mr. Baxter, in course—a friend of yours mustn't suffer any loss. Very hard, though," he added, taking a disconsolate look at the coat; "I was beginning to feel respectable again."

Baxter then addressed the conclave as follows:—

"Mates, I cannot give you any part of this load, for it belongs to master, and I have sworn to be honest for all his kindness to me. He has been the saving of me and

most on us, and I won't have him harmed a penny as long as I've an arm left to defend his property. But I have a load of things belonging to myself, which I bought to turn an honest penny by, and I am willing to give it you in God's name if it'll keep you from starving, and help to make honest men of you; but I'm afraid it's too late for that."

"God bless you, Jim," said the leader, "for that wish! If I had only taken your advice when you nursed me through my illness it would have been better for me. Don't be frightened at us, lady," he then said, turning to Jane; "we are a rough lot, I know; but God forbid we should hurt a woman, and, if you would take pity on a poor fellow, give him that Bible I saw you reading awhile back. It will remind me of happier times, and be a consolation to me when I am forced to deeds which I would gladly refrain from. Ah! you may look at me in surprise: but, believe me, I was not always thus—a fatality has pursued me. I was striving hard to redeem my character, but the master to whom I was allotted was a fiend. He drove me to desperation, and I struck him. No hope of escape was left but the bush, and here I shall rot some day, and be buried beneath the wind-driven leaves—fit punishment for the outcast and the ruffian. But we must be gone now, mates," he added, suddenly altering his voice and manner; "we must be moving; the police are after us, as you know; so make up the swag into bundles, and let's get to our horses. Jim, I owe you much for this help, and if I live will repay you."

"If I could only hear you'd turned an honest man," Jim growled, "I'd care precious little for this plunder. But now be off—we must be on the move. Is the road all safe from here to Stapleton?"

"Oh! you'll meet nobody but the police," said the ring-leader, with a laugh; "and, if you happen to come across a mob of darkies, just show them that," handing him a curiously carved assagai: "that will prove your passport."

The remainder of the journey was passed without any stoppage. They certainly met the police, but strenuously denied having seen anything of the bushrangers; and, when James was about to make an energetic protest, he received so dark a scowl from Baxter, that his words very speedily slipped down his throat again. On getting within sight of Stapleton, Baxter asked him as a favour not to mention to any one that they had met with any difficulty, and, as the loss would fall entirely on himself, the matter could be

hushed up. To this James consented, much moved by the entreaties of his wife, who had taken, woman-like, a great interest in the leader of the gang.

Stapleton, at the time of my story, was far from evidencing that it would so shortly spring up into an important township, and be connected with the capital by means of a railway; but then it lay on the direct route to the diggings, and the auri sacra fames is a wonderful lever for progress. At this time it merely consisted of four or five wattled houses, an inn, and a long whitewashed building, on which was painted in gigantic black letters, WORTHINGTON, MERCHANT, and consisting of a dwelling house, store, shop, and stables under one roof.

It is not necessary to give any account of the meeting, tempered as it was by the loss of the mother, whom old Mr. Worthington had been longing to see, and had prepared a home for her as comfortable as circumstances would allow. Hence he clung the more closely to Jane, who had always been a favourite of his, and delighted in the children, for whose welfare he had already built up the most magnificent prospects. But he allowed them very little time to rest; his activity would not suffer any delay in the pleasant process of money-making, and before long Jane was initiated into all the mysteries of the store, and appointed head directress of the household.

"And now that you have come, Jane, perhaps you will manage to keep some servants, for I can't. The jades all run off to get married as soon as you grow used to them. One very decent body I had as a sort of housekeeper stayed twelve months with me, but then gave me notice, as she said the village was beginning to speak about the impropriety of her living with a single man. She could only consent to stay if I would marry her; but as I suggested that I had a wife already, and did not feel disposed to commit bigamy, even through the temptation of her mature charms, why, we parted."

And old Mr. Worthington had a hearty chuckle at this reminiscence of his bachelor days, while Jane set to work at learning in a docile spirit all the duties which fell to her lot in her new home. And it was at first a very difficult task; her education had, I may say, unfitted her for this life, and it took some time before she could undo the past. But Mr. Worthington's unceasing energy acted as a perpetual stimulus; there was no hope of escaping from any office which he considered belonged to her department, and

if at times she tried to read a book, the old gentleman would take it from her laughingly, and say the only books she need study were the ledger and the cookery book, which last would considerably improve their dinner.

James, in the meanwhile, was going through the same rough process of training; he had learned to face oxen boldly, and was continually galloping about the country, buying up sheep and cattle from the dissatisfied stock-holders. Mr. Worthington soon became the largest holder in that part of the country, for he foresaw a great impending change, though he certainly could not guess in what direction, and his land was in capital order. But he did not neglect the hammer to which he owed his fortune, and a sale at his store was always an event to which the whole country side flocked in to be amused and edified by his dry jests, and rough, earnest practicality.

And if at times a regret crossed Jane's mind that her birth and education were sadly compromised by this rough contact with Anglo-Saxon peasants and ticket-of-leave men, still her natural good sense soon did away with any repining. She gradually grew to see that the duty of life is not dependent on adventitious circumstances, and that she was bound to devote herself to her new vocation with a lowly and yet determined spirit. It is wonderful how this resolve toned down difficulties; she found herself within three months as good a dairymaid as any in the neighbourhood who had been brought up to it from their youth, while the change that was taking place in her James was perfectly marvellous. There was not a trace of Cockneydom left; it had not been proof against his father's persistent jokes, and if you wished to offend him you need only call him a gentleman. He was beginning to learn the lesson which Australia is always ready to teach to those who open their ears to her, that independence is a charming compensation for the loss of those luxuries which are considered indispensable in polite society, but which sink into nothingness when your neighbours do not force you into expensive rivalry.

Many long consultations took place between old Worthington and Jane as to whether Charles should not be invited to join them at once, and take his part of the prosperity which had fallen on them. But Jane was strongly against this: she wished her brother to be the "gentleman" of the family, and worthy assertor of its dignity, and she felt he could only effect this in old England. The news, too, of

her sister's splendid marriage came to her assistance in the argument, and old Worthington was obliged to give in, beaten but not convinced. He therefore said no more, but wrote a long letter to Charles, in which he described the state of the country and the certainty of success for any energetic man. He did not urge him to come, but left it to his own good judgment, and if he failed in his career at home there was always a home ready for him at Stapleton. He wound up with some sage advice about Sir Amyas, which, however, was quite thrown away, for by the time the letter reached England Charley was in the thick of his troubles.

And here I think we may safely leave the Worthingtons, happier than they have been for several years. They, too, have gone through many and grievous trials, which have purified them, and prepared them for battling with the world. They are of that true sterling stuff which our heroes are composed of, and are sure to succeed eventually. But they would not have done so in England, hampered as they were by prejudices, and swifter racers than themselves on that course where the race is most surely to the swift. The future lies open before them, and they are enjoying the full measure of independence and prosperity, the sweeter because due in great measure to themselves.

But I would not have my readers run away with the notion that Australia is the paradise of persons in the class of the Worthingtons; on the contrary, I doubt whether they would not have been worse off there than in England, had they not had the old gentleman at their back to clear the scrub for them. It was very pleasant to drop into a comfortable home, and have everything ready to hand; but, supposing that they had arrived in Australia on the chance of success, what would have become of them? They would have added one more family to the ghastly number who have so long served as a warning of the impossibility of head making way against hands in a new colony. Though "head" will win the day, "hands" are sure of a very long innings at the outset.

CHAPTER XXXL

LITERARY PROSPECTS.

IN the meanwhile Charley was working away manfully at De Thou, and filling up his spare hours with his novel, or by extending his acquaintanceship among the literary and artistic Bohemians who congregate in Camden Town, and gratify their propensity for billiards and beer at the cheapest possible rate. My readers may possibly not be aware that we too have our Bohemia, although it is not so open to the public ken as the one in Paris, nor do our authors try to convert their experiences of Zingaro life into shekels, as is so often the case in Lutetia. But it must be borne in mind that Frenchmen are far beyond us in the literary art as regards the mercantile part of the business, and evince no delicacy as to using up incidents which any man of feeling would regard as most sacred. I do not think that "Mathilde," for instance, in which all the female characters the author avowed were drawn from his own *bonnes fortunes*, is likely to be imitated in this country.

Take it altogether, however, the Camden Town Bohemia is inhabited by very harmless denizens, who are, according to the popular verdict, nobody's enemies but their own. Their ranks are made up of unsuccessful authors and press-men, artists who have not yet gained admission to the Academy, veterinary pupils from the college, and medical students from University and King's. They all join in firm fellowship, and are ready to help each other to the last shilling, in which, I am afraid, the students suffer the most, for they have parents still who find them money, while artists and authors have to depend on their own exertions, and it is so much easier to borrow than work.

The artists were the nearest approach to Bohemia as it is in Paris; for they had solved the apparently impossible problem of living in London without money. The process was simple enough: a confiding house in the vicinity of Rathbone Place supplied them with the necessary materials of their art, and the rest was most facile. An artist, so long as he possessed an easel, was secure; he would take lodgings and live on the fat of the land; when the bill was pre-

sented there were, of course, no effects, but Mr. Scumble would be happy to work it out. A portrait of the lady of the establishment would settle a two months' bill; the same process would be repeated throughout the whole of the family, even down to the dog, which was always represented on the most velvety of red cushions, much more true than nature; and then, all being painted, Mr. Scumble would seek fresh fields and pastures new, leaving his old lodgings on a perfectly good understanding, and with the best of characters as a punctual tenant. If you, O my reader! were by any dire misfortune (which I heartily wish may not fall to your lot) forced to look out for lodgings in the healthy suburb of Camdentonia, you will notice at the first glance the immense extent of artistic development.

But though board and lodging were thus provided, as may be supposed, Mr. Scumble would require money in his pocket. His wants as regarded beer were generally satisfied in the same manner, and Mr. Spiggott, the worthy landlord of the Nag's Head, has a perfect picture gallery of his own smiling rubicund face, alternating with Mrs. Spiggott in black satin and the most massive of chains; but, of course, Mr. Scumble must have some money in his pocket for his *menus plaisirs*. This was effected by his producing some high art picture, which was never sold or accepted by the Academy; but, on the other hand, his uncle round the corner was always ready to advance money upon them, and Mr. Scumble made a holocaust of the representative tickets. And this is one of the chief nurseries for Wardour Street galleries, I may here remark; and, as all parties are satisfied, what reason have we to lament this prostitution of high art?

My hero was introduced to this heterogeneous company through Mr. Styffe, a misunderstood artist, who resided in the garret of the house where Charles lived. Poor Mr. Styffe had commenced at the parlours, and ascended by regular stages to the garret, where he now lived, happy as a king, and painting away at a "Finding of Harold's Body," which he had selected as an original subject which must attract attention. His only regret was that he could not drive æsthetic notions into his new friend, and prove to him that, by lying down as a nude model for several hours a day in the stifling garret, the true interests of art would be maintained. All that Charles could be induced to grant was that he would sit as a model for the Abbot of Battle, and to this compromise Mr. Styffe at length yielded. It was an expen-

sive luxury, for the attic was hot, and beer desirable; but Mr. Styffe was unable to supply the want, and Charles was compelled to act the part of purse. However, how could he begrudge beer when he knew that Mr. Styffe was too often in want of a dinner?

These and other interruptions of a similar nature prevented the rapid progress of the *magnum opus*, but even that was finished at last. My readers may gauge the depth which Charley had reached in Runciman's heart when I tell them that worthy gentleman conscientiously went through the awful task of reading the whole of the manuscript in the course of a week. When we bear in mind that Mr. Runciman was literary adviser to a publishing house, which thus purchased the silence of the *Skirmisher*, I trust this labour of love will be appreciated. His verdict on the novel was, on the whole, favourable.

"I'm sure it will do, Dashwood, for I've read the whole of it in print before."

"What do you mean?" said my hero, naturally alarmed.

"Why, you seem to me to have carefully studied a circulating library before setting about your task, and the result is you have collected a lot of incidents which belong to other individuals. However, don't be afraid; nobody will offer a reward for the detection of the thief."

"Be quiet, Runciman; but do you honestly think it will be accepted?"

"I think I know a way to insure that consummation," Runciman dryly replied, "and I will give you a note to Belloes, which will procure you an audience with him."

Charles overflowed with gratitude, and insisted on standing a dinner, which Mr. Runciman deigned to accept. Canny Scotchman as he was, he never refused a good offer, but you were mistaken if you thought to bribe him by such a trumpery sprat. I tried the experiment once on behalf of a book I was interested in, and Runciman drank me half a dozen of Larose claret. Whether he felt seedy in consequence I cannot say; all I know is, that my book was awfully pitched into in the next number of the *Skirmisher*, and I was kindly recommended to go back to school and learn to spell. Worst of all, when I upbraided Runciman for his perfidious conduct he insisted that he had done the book a service, for which the publisher had thanked him, as he was enabled to sell ten copies of the work in consequence, which was quite a godsend.

But I do not think Charley's book was so very bad. It was spoiled by a fantastic title, being called "The Red Flag at the Fore," because there was not a single nautical incident in it; but that was not my hero's fault, for Mr. Belloc's kept a gentleman on purpose to invent titles, which he considered, perhaps justly, were half the battle. But I am anticipating; I have not yet told you how the book came to be accepted.

Charley then, armed with his precious manuscript and the letter of introduction, boldly faced the lion in his den, and sent in his card, wishing to see the publisher on important business. But Mr. Belloc's was too old a hand to be taken in by this very transparent reason, and generally estimated very rightly that what was of importance to an author might be of very slight consequence to a publisher. There was a myth current that Mr. Belloc's was never visible to any one below a baronet, and that an effigy was put up to represent him when those of the common clay were anxious to see him. Hence visitors were generally sifted by being passed through the hands of some half dozen gentlemen, who all tried to detect their business, and judge whether Mr. Belloc's could spare two minutes of his valuable time to the new comer.

In this instance, however, the letter of introduction, with the sprawling "Alexander Runciman," proved an open sesame, and Charley soon found himself in the presence of the great man who breathed life into authors, and who was a true literary Warwick, able to make and depose kings by judicious puffery, or equally judicious withdrawal of advertising. There was nothing very terrific about him; he was a meek little man, who looked as if he spent his life in deprecating a kicking, and had a strange habit of peering at you from under his eyelids, and blushing violently when caught in the act. But, for all his apparent meekness and harmlessness, Mr. Belloc's was as clever a man of business as any to be found through the whole length and breadth of England, and could "reckon up" a pretentious author with the most extraordinary correctness.

He hurriedly ran over Runciman's note, and his manner became almost affectionate.

"I see that you have a three vol. novel to dispose of, Mr. Dashwood, and am happy to have the honour of receiving the first offer."

"By Jove," thought Charley, "that's worth £100 at least. Desboro' is right, and publishers are bricks."

"Yes, Mr. Belloces, and I think I may say without flattery it is a good one."

"Of that I have no doubt—Mr. Runciman's name is sufficient. He mentions, too, that you are a brother-in-law of the Marquis of Lancing."

"Yes, that is true; but I do not see what that has to do with the novel I propose to you."

"Hem! hem! Why, you see, Mr. Dashwood, you will pardon me, I trust, but you are a young author, and the public are not disposed to take up a book unless recommended by a great name. Now, do you think the Marquis would be disposed to edit the book? if so, I could offer you very liberal terms."

Charley looked with amazement on hearing this novel offer, but merely replied that he doubted whether it was in the Marquis's line, and, besides, he was from England. Mr. Belloces was foiled, but returned to the charge gallantly.

"Well, I am sorry for your sake that it is so—the name of the Marquis would have given the book a prestige. However, as I wish to oblige Mr. Runciman, I will publish your book on condition that your name does not appear on the title-page. I assure you it would do it harm, and perhaps the public may be inclined to believe it written by some eminent hand."

"And what terms, may I ask, would you be inclined to propose?"

"Well, well, you see, Mr. Dashwood, it makes a material difference. If the Marquis had edited the work I could have offered you £200; as it is, I can only —"

"By Jove, it is a hundred!" thought Charles, but was sadly deceived when Mr. Belloces added.—

"—Propose to publish on half profits. But you do not like that, perhaps," said the crafty old gentleman, noticing the blank look of dismay which floated across Charles's serene countenance. "Well, for your sake I will stretch a point, but I trust you will not mention it, for fear of establishing a dangerous precedent. I will give you £50 on the sale of three hundred and fifty, and £50 additional on the sale of five hundred, and then I am running a risk."

Oh, Mr. Belloces! why did you not blush on making this remark? You knew as well as I do that you would never sell three hundred and fifty, but you were perfectly well aware that two hundred would cover your outlay, and the rest would be profit to your own account, but nothing

to the author. But, of course, to Charles hope told the flattering tale of success, and he willingly accepted the offer.

The manuscript was read, and certain alterations suggested, which Charles willingly made, although he felt they weakened the book; the title was agreed to as proposed by Mr. Belloc's adviser, and the work progressed rapidly. Before long the morning papers contained artfully concocted paragraphs, in which "we" strongly recommended the new work as the most startling fiction which had appeared since Walter Scott. If you believed it, such men as Thackeray and Dickens had lived only to prove the vast superiority of the author who was making his *début*. But I am wrong; it was more than hinted in these veracious paragraphs that the talented work was owing to the pen of a late cabinet minister, who, in his forced retirement, revealed some most important secrets relating to the late crisis. Of course this paragraph had to be considerably modified before being sent to the *Times*, because that uncompromising journal will prick all such puffs by adding the fatal word "advertisement." This was Mr. Belloc's *bête noir*, and I believe he would have gladly paid the *Times* £4,000 a year if it would alter its system, and give him the opportunity of quoting his own words as the deliberate verdict of the *Times*.

After a due course of advertising the book appeared. Those papers which were bound to Mr. Belloc by principal or interest (for he had shares in several weekly papers as a matter of business) exaggerated their praise. The great literary organ behaved fairly, as usual, and, while allowing the merits of the book, pointed out its faults kindly, and encouraged the author to go on. Then the ruck of weekly papers, which form their critiques on what the great literary journal had said, followed suit, and praise and blame were equally balanced, the public not caring one jot for either, but reading the book, if the keeper of the circulating library recommended it to them. For about six weeks Mr. Belloc found it pay to keep on advertising, and then the great novel on which Charles had hoped to build his reputation died and made no sign, being superseded by a trashy story written by a lady of title.

Two months had passed away, and Charles not hearing anything from Mr. Belloc ventured to remind that gentleman of his existence; but Mr. Belloc having more weighty matters on hand than settling with an author politely handed him over to his managing man. The book had

been a great success—nearly three hundred had been sold, and there was no doubt the other fifty would go off rapidly. Need I delay on this subject longer? The book never reached the stipulated number; but I must do Mr. Belloc's the justice to say that he paid Charles £25, although the agreement was not fulfilled. Whether Mr. Runciman had anything to say in the matter I do not know; still it is refreshing, when so much abuse is sown broadcast about publishers, to be able to mention this simple act of fair play.

This was followed by an invitation to dinner, when Charles was introduced to the literary swells present as BROTHER-IN-LAW of the Marquis of Lausing, and author of so-and-so. The guests, as usual, ate and drank to their hearts' content, and formed into coteries to abuse the man's impudence for asking them; but it was marvellous to see the reverence they paid him, and the anxiety to stand in his good graces, as a means of heightening the price of their wares. Altogether it was a very amusing scene; and you may be sure that Charles, with his native love of satire, looked on with great gusto at this tangible proof of the dignity of authorship.

This mark of condescension was followed up, however, by a further proof of Mr. Belloc's good feeling toward Charles, for he despatched a note to him in the course of a week requesting his presence. Charles proceeded immediately to the great man, and found that Mr. Belloc was going to enhance his favours by giving him a commission.

"I have here a manuscript, Mr. Dashwood, of the 'Travels of the Duke of Staines,' which I am about to publish. I need not tell you that lords are not remarkable for grammar, and I understand that this manuscript is even more full of faults than is usually the case. I shall feel obliged by your taking it in hand. The copy, in its present shape, will make about two hundred and fifty pages, and I must stretch it out into two volumes octavo."

"That appears rather a difficult matter, Mr. Belloc, unless by large additions. May I ask to what country the travels refer?"

"Oh! they are of importance; the Duke has travelled by special permission in Siberia, and this book is to represent the result, from which much is expected. However, you have *carte blanche*, and will find no difficulty in obtaining ample matter from French and German sources. The honorarium we can afford to give is £50, and I shall be

glad to receive the manuscript at your earliest convenience, as it must appear this season."

"But don't you think this system rather unfair to all parties?"

"O dear, no! it's a very simple matter. The public must be tickled with a great name, or else it will not buy books in the present forcing age; and surely, Mr. Dashwood, in the sincere wish to impart valuable information, such as I am sure yours will prove, you will regard it as an honour that your efforts should be introduced under the auspices of a lord."

"But I do not exactly see how I shall be benefited, Mr. Belloes."

"Oh! you are too punctilious, Mr. Dashwood. I understood from our mutual friend, Mr. Runciman, that you wished to live by your literary exertions, and hence I made this application to you. But do not hesitate about declining it if you think it unworthy of your abilities; I can find plenty of gentlemen who will be delighted with the offer."

"Well, I suppose my poverty if not my will must consent, so I accept your proposition, and will set to work at once."

"Very good, and any works you may require for reference will be procured you, if you send in their names."

Charles, on reading the manuscript intrusted to him, found it even more slip-slop and useless than he had anticipated. More than two-thirds referred to an interview with the Emperor, who had magnetised the Duke with his historic eye; and the remainder was made up of trivial anecdotes intended for the sole glorification of the great man. It seemed as if the manuscript had been written by Jenkins, clothed for awhile in a valet's attire—perhaps it was. The task Charles had was not an easy one; for the Duke, while coolly assuming the whole credit, thought proper to cavil at assertions made, and, with a parcel of old cronies at the Carlton Club, made the most amusing shots at historical facts. Two or three sheets had to be cancelled and rewritten, because they bore too closely on the imperial character, and altogether Charles had a very thankless task, poorly compensated by £50. Nor was he particularly pleased at the unanimous burst of adulatory approval which the papers broke out in at the publication of the ducal travels; for, as the *Athenaeum* recently said about a book by another duke, "if a lord who ventures into print must be treated with respect, according to the

Johnsonian rule, what can be done with a duke?" To add to his annoyance his literary friends persistently chaffed my hero about his travels, and made further inquiries as to his interesting visit to the gold mines of Siberia, of which he brought home a specimen coined by Mr. Belloes into fifty solid sovereigns.

But the work did him no harm in the long run; it was a very careful compilation, and altogether lied like truth; and my young friend's name stood high in the publishing market as that of a man who could be trusted. And this is a great point toward success, for I am sorry to say that the gentlemen who are generally summoned by publishers to undertake jobs of this nature sometimes take advantage of the opportunity to obtain considerable advances, and the copy is consequently deferred. The rule appears to be that if a man has been paid for work to be done, he is very apt to neglect it for the sake of other work, the payment of which depends on its accomplishment. Altogether, then, Charles was steadily progressing, but we must remember that he worked indefatigably, and was a pattern of propriety. His only relaxation was in writing letters to his Helen, who was in marvellous spirits, and sure that things would turn out well yet, although she had not hinted a word to him about Julie's revelations, as she was determined that, until the papers were in her possession to prove her legitimacy, she would not allow Charles's claim to her hand.

Helen had heard nothing further from Julie, however, since she had sent the money, and the return of the amount soon after through the banker left her completely at sea as to the results of Julie's search after her Count. Still, the suspense gave her something to think about, and removed her anxiety to seek solace in the society of Madame von Tulpenhain's friends, which I do not think did any harm to her moral welfare.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE Convolvulus Gardens were in all their glory. The usual lying announcement of many extra millions of coloured lamps had attracted the public at the commencement of the season, and the excitement had been maintained at red heat by all sorts of ingenious devices. Dancing dogs, ballets, tight-rope performances, had succeeded each other with startling speed, and Mr. Bumpus chuckled as he counted over his gains, and regarded the highly satisfactory balance at his banker's, which was a most agreeable novelty. The more pleased was he at the thought that he had hitherto only gone through the Bankruptcy Court three times as a respectable tradesman, and his creditors had no power to touch his earnings. Had he fallen into the clutches of the Insolvent Court there would have been a constant threat hanging over him *in terrorem*, and his legitimate earnings would have been seized. This is a hint for fast young men: if they find themselves going down the road so fast that they have not time to put the skid on, they had better start in the horse-dealing line, which will secure them from all future unpleasautness.

For the finale of the season Mr. Bumpus had hit on a glorious scheme—neither more nor less than a lottery for seats in Professor Simmonds' car during his nocturnal ascents. It is true that people fought shy of this, as the professor let off fireworks beneath the car on his ascent, and there was a chance of a rocket going upwards instead of downwards, and setting the balloon on fire. Still people liked to speculate on the chance of winning a ticket: even if they did not make use of it, it was something to talk about at home, and the man who "could have gone up in a balloon" became "a person" in the domestic circle for at least three days.

Charley, feeling the necessity of some amusement after a fortnight's hard work, began studying the dead walls, and the flaming placards of the Convolvulus Gardens, with a woodcut of a balloon, decided him. I must do him the credit, however, to state that the dancing rotunda, with the cer-

tainty of partners, had nothing to do with this decision; he had put away childish things for good, and visited the Convolvulus Gardens more as a character student than for the sake of meretricious amusement. But, after all, it was slow; you soon grow tired of watching improper characters and linen-drapers flirting, and you cannot go on drinking bottled porter all night through. The most amusing thing was the *poses plastiques*, in which a motherly-looking woman, who ought to have known better, appeared as Venus attired by the Graces; but the feeling soon merged into one of sorrow that a poor woman should be compelled, for the sake of a starving family, to go through a performance so utterly subversive of all feelings of womanly dignity.

At length the successful tickets were announced, and, of course, Charles's was not one of them; but he had a great fancy to go up in a balloon, much stimulated thereunto by Albert Smith's graphic account of his perilous ascent, and cast about for means to carry out his intention. Chance favoured him, for while strolling about and trying to catch the professor, he was witness of a most interesting family group.

A chubby-looking young woman, with three small children, was hanging on to the skirts of a mechanic in his Sunday clothes, to the dire peril of his dress coat. It seemed that he had gained a seat, and was insisting on his right to make use of it. His wife naturally objected to this, and a fine struggle between love and pride had ensued. The man was half afraid, that could be seen at a glance, and yet he did not like to give in; so Charley made his appearance as a veritable *deus ex machinâ*.

"I think I can help you, ma'am," he said most politely; "if your husband likes to take a crown for his ticket I will give it."

"There, John, now you have no excuse. Take the gentleman's offer at once, and I'm much obliged to you, sir, I'm sure. My husband has had a drop too much, or he wouldn't be so foolish. Come, John, take the five shillings, and we'll go and have some gin and water."

This bait was too attractive; the man gladly consented to the sale, and Charles walked off, followed by the blessings of the young woman, intermingled with regrets that such a nice looking young man was going to meet certain death to save her husband from it.

In the meanwhile the wind had got up quickly, and some dark, menacing storm-clouds were gathering on the horizon.

This foreboding of bad weather soon dissipated the slight courage which the other ticket holders had hitherto kept up by libations to the spirit god, and eventually Charles was left alone to brave the perils of the air with the professor. The latter gentleman was busily engaged with his preparations, and perhaps glad in his heart at having got rid of so much useless ballast, which he could not throw overboard unfortunately. Still he found time to reply to Charles's whisper as to what was his favourite beverage, and four bottles of sherry were soon stowed safely away in the car. Charles then took his seat by the side of the professor, the balloon rapidly slid down the liberating iron, and the earth gradually receded from the balloon.

I say advisedly the earth receded, for so motionless did the balloon appear, that it gave the impression that the earth was moving, not the machine. The professor stooped over the car and pulled a string which set off the fireworks, and at the same time allowed the frame to drop a considerable distance from the balloon, to insure it from danger. The fire burnt out harmlessly, and a couple of bags of sand sent over the side soon drove the huge machine beyond danger. The professor then found time to seat himself and tackle the sherry.

"As soon as we have got through this dark cloud," he said, "we shall be in a perfect calm. The fools down there did not know that, but fancied we should have to face the wind. All the better I say, for they are a perfect nuisance, and destroy all the poetry of the ascent by their absurd cackling. And it is a beautiful sight you will allow. Look over the side of the car at that huge metropolis of ours. Don't be frightened; hold on by the rope, and you cannot fall out."

Charles took a rapid glance at the city stretched out beneath his feet, and in truth it was a wonderful sight. They were drifting slowly along in an easterly direction, and the effect of cloud-land was truly magical, as the rift every now and then allowed a glance at the city, and the closing clouds shut it out from sight again. The great thoroughfares could be traced by their regular lights, while here and there a brighter illumination revealed the temple of the demon of gin. By degrees they passed away; the sparing lights showed the balloon was following the track of a suburban road, and at length they reached the open country, and all around was darkness.

"I am surprised," said Charles, "that I experience no sen-

sation beyond one of unalloyed pleasure. I had thought I should feel nervous, but the idea is absurd. But this groping in darkness visible is very curious—no landmark to know in what direction we are progressing—no knowing where we shall make land. What a pity there is no possibility of managing these unwieldy machines, and reducing them to the control of the master spirit, man! It seems strange that he should be so defied by an element, and it is somewhat humiliating too."

"I am afraid that the consummation will never come about. I have tried every experiment that has been suggested, except, of course, those which are dangerous or too expensive; but, so long as the mechanism is applied to the car, it will be impossible to check the headstrong movements of the great gas-bag above us."

Mr. Simmonds was evidently beginning to learn wisdom; perhaps before long he will give up his republican notions and become a pattern citizen.

"I should think that the life of an aéronaut must be a strange medley of accidents. I wonder whether any office would insure your life."

"And yet there is a glorious fascination about it—this utter freedom from the world and its pettiness is an ample reward for dangers. I have had as many accidents as any man, yet I cannot give up my profession. I suppose some day I shall be killed, and then there's an end of Job Simmonds. People will say he was a feather-brained fool, and has been rightly punished for his folly; and yet, believe me, sir, I have always striven to act conscientiously, and draw such advantages from the balloon as I think it capable of giving to humanity. I live in hope yet to bring it to some degree of perfection; and, if so, my name may rank with that of George Stephenson. In fact, I have a clear conscience void of offence, and can go down to my grave calmly. I have looked death so often in the face that he has no terrors for me. I have broken every bone in my body; I have suffered losses innumerable; my balloon has been burnt or destroyed seven times, and yet I go on. You may think me a lunatic—perhaps I am; still I would not exchange places with the Queen—except that I might hang the First Lord."

And the professor, having thus edged in his favourite topic, poured forth his wrongs into Charles's wearied ear. Still there was so much sound sense mixed up with his lunacy, and such evident overflowing of the milk of human kindness, that Charles listened sorrowfully, while respecting

a man who devoted himself with such earnestness of purpose to a profession so utterly hopeless of result.

"By Jove, Mr. Simmonds," Charles said, after a long dia-
tribe from the professor, "you ought to write your life; it
would prove far more interesting than one-half the books
now published."

"Do you really think so?" said the little man, visibly
elated; "do you fancy the public would take any interest in
the humble professor? To tell you the truth, I have
already thought on the subject, and have jotted down some
loose notes; but they require careful editing, and putting
into an attractive form."

"Well, I daresay I can help you, if you like to trust to
my weak pen. As I belong to the noble army of authours,
I should have no objection to offer you my services to put
your manuscripts ship-shape."

"Shake hands, my dear sir; the crowning ambition of
Job Simmonds' life is on the point of being fulfilled. You
do not know how happy you make me by the offer. I am
even happier than when I fell out of the parachute, and
found I had only broken my collar-bone."

And this strange comparison was meant in all sincerity.
But Charles's feeling of security was invaded by a very
ominous sound above his head, strongly suggestive of the bal-
loon having burst; his companion, however, re-assured him.

"Oh, it's nothing; the gas is expanding, and filling up
all the silk of the balloon. It often grows hard in places
when lying by, and we never fill more than two-thirds,
trusting to the expansion. 'Tis a curious sound, but all is
safe. And now, to return to our interesting topic, you would
really feel disposed to help me in making my history known?
if so, I think I could do something to benefit you in my
humble way. The manager of the *Tricolor* is an old friend
of mine, and is anxious to secure the services of a gentleman
conversant with French and German, to attend to the inter-
ests of his paper while he is engaged abroad. I feel sure
that he would gladly avail himself of your services, and, if
so, will you meet me to-morrow at the office, when we can
talk matters over?"

"Agreed," said Charles; "but look at that pale gleam of
light on the horizon: surely the sun is rising."

"It is so, and you will speedily see one of the most magni-
ficent sights in nature. But I wish the wind would change;
with the rising sun, for I am afraid we shall be blown out
to sea, and, although I have my 'safety car,' made to stand

water, it is not very comfortable to be floating about hap-hazard, and have nothing to eat."

Mr. Simmonds, however, like a cautious general, made all the requisite preparations for security by dragging up the firework frame close to the bottom of the car, and disentangling the life and grappling lines. In the meantime the sun rose gorgeously, and threw a yellow tinge over the sea: gradually it spread, and tinged the summits of the surrounding hills, till suddenly, as if by magic, the mist curtain was withdrawn, and the earth lay at their feet, suffused in one liquid bath of light. The professor, however, regarded it all very tranquilly, and made various attempts to grapple with the land. Unfortunately the coast was very nude of trees, and a lurch at any hapless hedge met with no resistance.

"We shall have to take to the sea I am afraid, sir," he said, in a very dolorous voice; "the water has such a tendency to drag the balloon down, and I have no ballast left to try and rise into higher currents, so look out for a cold bath. But stay, there is one chance left: I will have a cast at that clump of trees; if the grapple holds we are saved."

With practised eye the professor heaved the grappling iron: it dragged heavily over the trees, trying in vain to hold them, and the professor was just giving up in despair when a fence pulled them up. The balloon, checked in its impetus, bounded madly, as if ready to burst the offending ligature which bound it so unwilling to earth; but it was at length forced to yield, and gradually settled down, Mr. Simmonds tugging manfully the while at the valve-line.

"Jump up on the hoop, Mr. Dashwood," he shouted; "we shall have a heavy fall, and you may break your leg."

And, with the activity of a wild cat, the professor jumped up the rigging, and sat serenely smiling at the havoc below. Charles just succeeded in performing the same feat when the car struck the ground with an angry thud, as if desirous to dig a hole in it, and scattering everything it contained in the wildest confusion. Up it bounced again, as if, Antæus-like, it had gained fresh strength by the contact, and went through the same pleasing performance some half-dozen times, the gas rushing out the while with a roar of defiance. At length the monster was subdued, and lay there an inert mass, frantically heaving its huge sides, and still striving to burst its bonds; but the professor and Charles sprang out, and began expelling the gas by pressing on the silk, and throwing their whole weight upon it.

At length the rustics began to collect, roused from their dull, apathetic toil by the unwonted guest; but no persuasions would induce them to lay hands on the balloon. "They did not like the look of 'un," was their remark, and they evidently regarded it as some visitant from the other world. But soon the farmer made his appearance with his sons, fine stalwart young fellows, ready to face a Russian battery, and they lent their welcome assistance in bringing the balloon to submission. Within a very short time the silk was ignominiously packed into the car, and the whole lifted on to a waggon, to be carried to the nearest station. Mr. Simmonds distributed all his loose silver among the gaping rustics, who had a fine throat for beer, and his popularity attained its zenith.

The farmer very politely invited them to breakfast, a meal they were very glad to have after their long passage through the air. Nor did they despise the home-brewed set before them in lieu of the domestic tea-pot. Then they started off for town, and parted, on the understanding that Charles should attend at the *Tricolor* office the next day, and talk matters over—Mr. Simmonds cabbing it to the Convolvulus Gardens to settle with Mr. Bumpus, while Charles went to his Camden Town home and model-sitting.

It was strange, though, what fascination ballooning had exercised over him so rapidly. Although, before the trial, he would have joined in the common cry of "balloonatics," now that he had experienced the sensation evoked by sailing through the air, he could perfectly well understand how people could devote their whole life and fortune to the profession. You feel, in truth, such a remarkable buoyancy and lightness when up in the clouds, that you regard with contempt the world, with its concomitant dunning; you feel master of yourself and your motions, and, however much you may owe, you are certain of not visiting Ikey Moss—so long, at any rate, as you avoid contact with the earth. Then there is some satisfaction to a discontented mind in being able to empty your sand-bags in the faces of the mob—a species of insult which you can indulge in safely, without fear of being punished for it. And there is, too, in a balloon ascent, a certain feeling of risk run (although, in truth, with a skilful aéronaut, it is just as safe as a locomotive), which is a stimulus to every man who is worth a pin. In short, I wonder that more persons do not avail themselves of this pleasing excitement. Probably this arises from the few

aërial machines existing, and the thought that, if you were killed, people would say it served you right.

Charles, as a provident youth, looked to a rapid return of his outlay, and dressed up his aërial trip into a very amusing article, which appeared soon after, and contained a due glorification of Mr. Simmonds, much to that gentleman's gratification, for he was as greedy of flattery as a woman. Then, having nothing better to do, he called, in on Runciman, and listened to that worthy gentleman's sarcastic remarks on men and things, which always made him melancholy. There is something very searing to a young mind in the practised cynicism of one's elders; and Mr. Runciman carried that heartlessness which is peculiar to the Keats destroyers to a fearful pitch. If he had any particular failing it was an intense disgust for young literary aspirants, whom he strove to put down like Sir Peter Laurie the organ-grinders, and at the period of my hero's visit was busily engaged in cutting up a new and successful poet. If it was bitterness to him to find the new author read, it was gall when his eagle eye could not detect a fault on which to pounce. The verses were full of poetry, and the grammar had in no instance been sacrificed to the exigencies of the rhyme. Hence Mr. Runciman was driven to the last refuge of baffled critics—he detected one or two printers' errors, and upon this scanty basis heaped up a mountain of abuse, clothed in the choicest literary Billingsgate. Having thus fulfilled his duties as a critic, and gratified his feelings as a fellow author, Mr. Runciman accepted an invitation to dinner from Charley. It was wonderful what an appetite he had; the ghoul-like repast he had just enjoyed in picking the bones of a luckless author only served as a stimulus, and he attacked Simpson's old port with a perseverance worthy of a better cause.

In the evening I am sorry to say Charles also gave way to his bad feelings. An author, a man of mark, produced a new play full of talent, and in a fair way to satisfy the acknowledged want of the day. Unfortunately the author was himself a critic, and had discharged his duties conscientiously by waging dire warfare against the whole breed of adapters from the French. The occasion to repay him for past favours could not be neglected, and the house was thronged with literary men, determined that the play should not succeed. The beauties of diction and action which it contained only served as occasion for shouts of laughter, and in the midst of the most pathetic scenes a rictus horribilis overpowered

the worthiest exertions of the actors. These, too, met by a storm of opposition, soon lost heart, for it was impossible to gain distinction in the face of such determined enemies. The curtain fell at the close of the third act, not to rise again, and the manager was compelled to come forward and announce the piece withdrawn.

"The Lord protect me," Charles said to himself very fervently, "from ever finishing my play, if that is the way in which a honest attempt to fill up the great vacuum is met. Men are all raving about the degeneracy of the drama and the French invasion, and yet when an author brings out a good play they unite heart and soul to Burke it. Command me to literary men, if I want support in striking out a new path."

The army of adapters had triumphed; mechanism had gained the night over talent, and the theatres were handed over to the French. The brilliant successes which ensued, and which led two managers by devious paths to the Bankruptcy Court, were a sufficient proof of the present healthy condition of the drama, and the utter folly of those who devote their energies honestly and conscientiously to its revival.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE TRICOLOR.

AT the appointed time Charles found himself at the office of the *Tricolor*, which was situated in a gloomy court leading from a labyrinthine network of other courts near Leicester Square. The office was on the first floor of a café, no other than our friend Zampa's, and was certainly very convenient for the contributors, who spent three parts of their time and all their earnings in the dingy coffee-room, writing their copy on backs of old letters, and producing the most impossible medley of bad English and foreign languages.

The manager of the paper, I need hardly say, was a Pole; and Charles, on entering the editorial sanctum, found him busily engaged with the professor in discussing a pot of half-and-half, the only beverage which foreigners really affection in brumous England. Poor Malibran, the poet

Bunn tells us in his amusing melange, "The Stage," could only get through the music of the "Maid of Artois" by being deluged with porter, and a negro in the suite of the wicked Marquis carried in a gourd round his neck a pint of that mellifluous beverage. I only hope Bunn took care to procure it direct from the brewers, and not expose the great singer to the tender mercies of the "house round the corner." If he did not, I am afraid a jury of "thirsty souls" would have condemned him as the cause of her premature death by administering slow poison in the shape of *cocculus Indicus*.

The professor had not forgotten his autobiography, for a huge pile of papers and books stared Charley in the face, as representing the few jottings to which the professor had alluded, but which would have filled a moderately sized cart. But M. Wolkonski saved Charley from the impending assault by suggesting that the business of the paper should be transacted first, and the professor, after some coquetting, was obliged to yield assent.

The *Tricolor* was a very curious paper, which had been carried on in London since the revolution of 1848. No one knew who was the proprietor, or where the money came from to conduct it. At any rate it paid all its expenses, and that certainly was not out of the sale, which rarely amounted to a dozen copies weekly as far as England was concerned. The remainder of the edition was smuggled into France and Germany; but what good it could do, except in promoting the study of English, it would be difficult to decide. Altogether I fancy it was a failure; but that was no concern of Charley's. He was offered very liberal terms by the manager, £4 a week, and he would be required to attend to the getting out of the paper, translating articles and correcting English being the chief part of his duties. The principles the paper advocated were free trade and constitutionalism, and there was none of that rampant republicanism which Charles had anticipated. On the contrary, it was extremely moderate, and my hero was lost in amazement that it should be found necessary to smuggle so innocuous a journal into continental circulation. For my own part I believe the governments would not have interfered with the twaddle had it been openly paraded on the market-places; but your true republican must affect mystery, and go a mile round to reach a point fifty yards off.

Charles had nothing to do with the pecuniary arrange-

ments of the journal: those were all settled by M. Wolkonski, who made up for the extravagant payment of the sub-editor by cutting down the unhappy refugees, who had to tone their republicanism and write about things they did not understand at the rate of five shillings a column. Poor Charley was sorry to his heart when his inexorable pen cut the articles to pieces, and reduced a pound to the more modest proportions of seven and sixpence, and the imploring cries of the unhappy writers rang in his ears. At last, however, he grew used to it, and became, I am sorry to say, a true editorial tyrant. But there was one leader, written sometimes in French, sometimes in English, which he was never allowed to touch or correct, however faulty it might appear; it must be set up exactly from the copy, and the greatest care taken that it was followed word for word. It was not till long after that Charles discovered the secret: it was a judiciously arranged cipher, by which the fraternal democrats made known their wants and wishes to their allies in France, and paved the way, as they fondly hoped, for the regeneration of the continent, not forgetting their own prospective aggrandisement.

But Charles had to pay a bitter penalty for his office by being bored out of his life by the professor, who, now thoroughly afflicted by the cacoëthes of authorship, was constantly at his heels to watch the progress of the great work. It was almost impossible, however, to carry it into effect; for the professor wrote the most extraordinary fist conceivable, and was very fond of repetition, so that when Charley had waded through a mass of copy, correcting here, erasing there, and hoped he had completed a portion of his task, the very next pile would contain precisely the same story, but so blended with new matter that he could not cancel it, and yet could not use it. At length he was obliged to offer the professor that he would write the book from his manuscript data, but to this Mr. Simmonds could not assent. He was desirous to be the sole author, and very naturally assumed that no one could write his life with such unction as himself. Fortunately he was called out of town by a provincial engagement, and, managing to break his arm during a descent by a violent collision with a chimney-pot, Charles was saved from his waylaying for awhile, and enabled to progress with his second novel and the great *De Thou* editing, which Runciman had handed over to him entirely. The *Tricolor* occupied but a short portion of his time, and he was earning money much

faster than he could spend it; but, of course, he soon found occasion to get rid of his savings.

I do not know how it is that people manage to save money and retire from business with so many thousands of pounds. They do not appear to begrudge themselves any luxury or comfort, and yet they are coining money the while. You do not hear of such things happening to authors except on rare occasions. Some men certainly make a great success with a book, and, their name being up in the market, are paid tremendously for every line they write, and I can understand how they lay by a few thousands; but they are very rare. We have had lamentable instances but very recently of the hand-to-mouth existence which even our greatest writers lead, and leave their family to the charity of their literary brethren, which, I am glad to say, is never invoked in vain. Still it is a curious trait that this so rarely happens in other professions. If Dr. Squills, after struggling through life in the pursuit of slippery guineas, and with a large small family, yields to the unequal contest, we do not find public appeals made for the support of that family, as they are for the author's family, members of which are, probably, able to procure their own ample livelihood, while Dr. Squill's children must have a large sum spent upon them before they are ready for any profession. An author's materials are so simple. A ream of paper, a sheaf of pens, and a bottle of ink are not very expensive; and a club, or even a brass plate on a respectable door, is a cheap luxury.

I will allow that an author has a thousand claims upon him which the grocer or the linen-draper is unacquainted with. So soon as a man's name is up in the literary market he becomes the prey of a multitude of drones, who hang on to the skirts of literature, and earn an easy livelihood by begging letters. It is to the credit of our great writers that they so liberally respond to the appeal; but still I do not think that justifies them in forgetting the golden rule that "charity begins at home." An author dependent solely on his pen is in a very precarious position: a sudden illness may reduce him to poverty, or the overwrought brain give way at the moment when the most pressing claims are made upon it. Then what is left but the miserable remembrances of sums thrown away, one tithe of which would secure comfort and respectability? The consciousness of having spent an active life in the exercise of the most ungrudging charity will not, in this matter-of-fact world,

supply the want of nourishing food, and an author is forced to the awful knowledge that the only chance for his family to prosper is in his leaving the world, and exciting that sympathy which a great calamity or sudden shock to society never fails in producing.

With the younger tribe of authors, among whom Charles Dashwood is enrolled, the want of a saving propensity is perhaps excusable. It is rare that a man at starting can secure a position rendering him independent. He has generally to trust to the waifs and strays of literature, and the refusal of an article may keep him for awhile without bread. Hence he is very apt to enjoy the present, and, so long as money comes in, he is inclined to spend it as a compensation for past poverty. "Live while you live" appears to be the motto of authors.

Charles Dashwood had passed through this dangerous ordeal; he had known all the sweets and bitters of literary life, and, now that he had secured a permanent engagement, and was in a fair way to fortune, he determined to save money for any rainy day. But, that it is far easier to form such resolves than to carry them into effect, Charles soon learned, and, though he was quite blameless for the way which his money went, the fact remains the same.

He was walking along Fleet Street meditating on some trifles, and wholly engaged with them, when he felt a light hand laid on his shoulder, and heard an exclamation, "Mr. Dashwood! Thank God, then, I am saved!"

He turned round quickly, and saw a lady concealed in a deep veil and thick cloak, who beckoned him to follow her into a side street. She then threw up her veil, and exclaimed in a hollow voice, "My God! he does not know me. Am I so changed then, Mr. Dashwood, that you cannot remember Flora Delancy, whom you once flattered for her beautiful face?"

Charles fell back in horror; he could not have believed that the wretched, care-worn woman who now stood before him had been so recently the pride of Gürkenhof and the adoration of the portrait painters. Her features had fallen in, and she was altogether the picture of abject misery. The large cloak she wore as it flew open displayed a coarse linen dress, which could be but poor protection from the nipping cold wind that swept across the bridges.

"Yes, Mr. Dashwood, you see before you a truly wretched woman. Who would have believed that such a fate was in store for me? The once admired girl has

reached womanhood only to become a beggar now, something worse hereafter"—and she shuddered, though not with the cold—"unless you will hold out a helping hand. O Charles!—let me call you by that name, for it reminds me of happier times—I feel sure you will not desert me in this great hour of affliction. I have no friend but you, and it was surely God's mercy when I met you. I had but a choice between a life of sin or a death of suicide, and I could not make up my mind as to which would be sooner pardoned by an offended Creator."

"But tell me, where is your husband? I understood you left England with him after the last Derby."

"Do you see that mark?" she said fiercely, pointing to the sanguine wale which scarred her face. "That was my last parting with my husband. I could have forgiven him everything—the loss of my money, the wanton wreck of my happiness; but when he threw me into the way of temptation, and coarsely called me a fool because I complained to him of attentions which no married woman could mistake, then I could read the utter blackness of his heart, and spurned him as much as I had loved him before. I passionately upbraided him for his villany, and the coward felled me to the earth with his riding-whip: the mark I shall carry with me to the grave. Maddened with the pain, and almost unconscious, I wandered out on to the busy Boulevards in search of I know not what. At length fatigue compelled me to return home, and I found that my husband had deserted me, carrying off everything of value, even to my wearing apparel. The shock threw me on a bed of illness, and I quitted it the wreck you now see me. By the sale of my watch I managed to pay for the few comforts bestowed on me during my illness, and came over here with my poor infant in search of my mother."

"Surely she did something for you—she offered you a home?"

"My poor boy," Flora said, with a bitter smile, "you are sadly innocent of the motives which influence the fashionable world. Had not my husband fled the country in disgrace I might have been forgiven; but his name was a byword, and not mentioned. Hence my mother, irritated by her connection with him, received my entreaties with a sneer, and forbade me the house. She had no daughter, was her reply to my passionate appeals. The next time I called at her house she had gone to the continent. I had no one to help me, and took humble lodgings, where I remained,

hoping to hide my shame, till my money was exhausted. This morning I received notice to leave my lodgings, for my landlady, though a kind-hearted woman, could not afford to let me keep a room, on the letting of which her livelihood depended. I urged her to take charge of my child while I went to make a last appeal. I called on Lady Cantrip, an old schoolfellow, who I thought would assist me in remembrance of past days. She, too, was out of town, and, starvation staring me in the face, I became reckless. Fortunately I met you, and feel that I am saved."

It was impossible for Charles to reject this appeal; so, after a hurried conference with his pocket, he determined on placing Mrs. Fitzspavin in lodgings at his own expense until something might turn up. He hurried off in a cab to pay her arrears of rent and redeem her child, and soon after had the satisfaction of seeing her comfortably sheltered in a lodging near his own. But it was a long time before Flora could procure anything of advantage to herself, and hence he set her to work translating some German children's books, which he thought might meet with a ready demand from the publishers. I do not think he ever felt a heartier glow of satisfaction than when he handed Flora £20 as the result of her labours, and told her more work was in readiness for her.

In the meanwhile the *Tricolor* went on its slow progress, remaining almost stationary in point of fact. The same mysterious conferences took place in M. Wolkonski's room with bearded strangers, who appeared, only to disappear again. The state of Europe continued the same in spite of the adjurations breathed through the leader of the *Tricolor*, and the tranquillity based on bayonets secured the normal condition of France. Cavaignac had dealt that terrible blow to the revolutionary party in July, 1848, from which it has not yet recovered, and had paved the way for his successor, after meeting with the usual fate of political leaders. He had been adored, then commented on; abused, and, worst stage of all, despised, and that is moral death for a Frenchman. Look at poor old Lamartine, and say, with his fate staring you in the face, whether the president of a republic sleeps on a bed of roses. He served as a lightning conductor so long as he was wanted, and then was taken down and sold for less than his value as old iron.

At length, however, the *Tricolor* moved from its torpor, and great was the congregation of Poles and others in the dingy office. From morning till night they gabbled about

revolution, and besieged M. Wolkouski for money to pay their expenses to the scene of action. The insurrection had been initiated in Pumpernickel; the cause of the people was triumphing at last, and the example would indubitably be followed through the whole length and breadth of Germany. They must not be clanking their fetters as the sole response to the appeal of their country, and Wolkonski *must* give them money to go with. That gentleman was sadly put to it in his attempts to stop the mouths of all the claimants, but by some mysterious process succeeded, and the office was tranquil for awhile.

The insurrection in Pumpernickel was spreading over the whole of that benighted country, the Grand Duke had fled, and the government was in the hands of the popular leaders. For the cause of liberty it was essential that the *Tricolor* should be represented at the scene of action, and Wolkonski proposed to Charles that he should go out as correspondent with a magnificent salary. As an Englishman he would be enabled to judge for himself, and could gauge the temper of the surrounding peoples.

Charles, like a fool, gladly consented to this offer. *Est natura hominum novitatis avida*, and he would be delighted to exchange his present hum-drum existence for awhile for the turmoil of civil war. Besides, he felt some apprehension about Helen's security, and an anxiety to see her, which could be so easily gratified. Hence he spurned the advice of his sager friends, who recommended him to have nothing to do with such a ticklish affair. He might get himself imprisoned for years, and it was not so easy to emerge from a German prison when once shut up in it. Runciman was the most zealous opponent of the scheme, probably fearing that De Thou would be thrown on his hands again; but it was all of no avail. Charles was determined to go, and laughed at all thoughts of danger. The consciousness of being a *civis Britannicus* armed him against all thought of risk, and he fancied he should have a very pleasant summer tour.

But if he believed he was going to leave England unobserved he was egregiously mistaken. The secret police of the embassies had their eye upon him, and on every one connected with the *Tricolor*, and it was not likely that the editor of that firebrand, as they termed it, would leave his duties without some reference being made to it among the contributors. Hence the same mail-boat which bore Charles to Ostende carried a very distinct signalment of my hero,

addressed to the various police offices. He was described as a violent partisan of the red republicans, and a dangerous demagogue, and measures would be taken to stop him when he evinced the slightest disposition to kick up a row. But Charles frustrated their schemes very unconsciously. Having plenty of money in his pocket, and feeling no particular inclination to hasten to the scene of action, he diverged to Paris, where he intended to stay a week, and enter Pumpernickel from the Strasbourg side. The police were completely thrown out, and vented their spite by annoying every Englishman who fell in their clutches ; but Charles was so far safe.

But he found no great inducement to stay any length of time in Paris. That city was like a city of the dead, with an ominous cloud brooding over it, suggestive of coming bloodshed. The Prince President was beginning that system, which he eventually carried out so cleverly, of stultifying the constituent assembly, and a small attempt at insurrection had just been crushed by the wonderful mastery he displayed in the way of handling troops and rendering an émeute impossible. The finest proof of this he gave on the memorable deux Décembre, when he allowed the insurrectionists to assemble without let or hinderance, and choose their battle-field. He held them like a rat in a trap, and the lesson he read the Parisians on that occasion was written in such blood-red characters that they have not faded from remembrance yet.

Charles paid a visit to Golgotha, but found there a race that knew not Joseph. All his old friends had disappeared, some through battle, murder, and sudden death ; others had recognised the futility of resistance, and sunk down into steady, sober citizens. By dint of repeated inquiries he found that François had settled down as a chemist in his native town, while Jules, whose profession had been knocked to pieces by repeated revolutions, had ended by turning blood-red, and was now supposed to be luxuriating beneath the tropical sun of Cayenne, making magnificent studies for pictures — which he could paint when he returned home.

A week of Paris was more than sufficient for Charley under these circumstances. He therefore took passage in one of Lafitte's interesting conveyances for Strasbourg, and after forty-eight hours' jolting, slightly relieved by cold ham and a hamper of champagne laid in at Epernay, he reached the frontier of Germany ; then, quietly walking across the

bridge at Kehl, and meeting no resistance from the police authorities, who probably thought he was a harmless excursionist come across to drink a bottle of Rhenish, he sauntered to the railway station, and was soon en route for Gürkenhof.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE REVOLUTION.

It was perfectly correct that Pumpernickel was in a state of revolution; but the actual facts which led to that consummation remain to be told. The various rulers of Germany had succeeded in putting down every semblance of liberty—the natural re-action of the absurdity of 1848—and hence looked with an eye of extreme jealousy on the rag of constitutionalism still fluttering in Pumpernickel. They determined to crush this rock of offence as speedily as possible, and the Grand Ducal representative at the diet was advised that Pumpernickel must revert to the *status quo*, if his serene master wished to retain the friendship of the houses regnant. Any pretext, no matter what, must be employed to incite the people to rebellion: the Grand Duke need not be alarmed, even if driven from the country: they would restore him, and at the same time free him from the arch-demagogues who had so long disturbed his rest.

Now, this Machiavellian policy looked two ways. In the first place, the despots were enabled to destroy at one blow all the democrats who had assembled in Pumpernickel as a last home, and then they could excuse the act to their own people, and justify themselves by saying, "See the consequences of liberty. The Grand Duke foolishly yielded to the arrogant demands of his people, and here you have the result; the strong republican spirit has expelled him from his throne. Let us thank heaven that we are not as they." Besides, it gave their troops an excellent occasion for a little quiet plunder, and there was quite a spirit of rivalry among the powers, until it was decided to which the honourable task of reseating the Grand Duke on the throne of his fathers should be intrusted.

These arrangements being satisfactorily carried out, all that was left for the Grand Duke was to bring about the

row which would give him a pretext for running. An excuse was speedily found. The police received instructions to raise the price of a glass of beer half a farthing, and the fun immediately commenced. If a German is notoriously a patient animal there are limits to that patience. You may kick him, spurn, abuse him, lock him up, keep him in mental and bodily slavery, make him the byword of nations, force him to emigration and worse tyranny across the Atlantic—all this he will suffer; but touch his beer ever so slightly, and you rouse the courage of the Teutonic eagle. The Pumpernickel Michels were not a bit behind the other Michels in this point, and gave vent to their outraged feelings in powerful groaning and collecting round the palace. As the gendarmerie did not interfere, which was quite unaccountable, the mob soon grew very bold, and began breaking windows. By a natural process they next vented their spite on the Countess Tulpenhain, and made indications of a wish to break into her house. Gray tells us most truly, and in very mellifluous verse, that “a favourite has no friends,” whether it be the mistress of a Grand Duke or the tom cat of an old maid. But the Countess being of the people was not disposed to suffer at the hands of her brothers; so she appeared in the doorway with a brace of pistols, and threatened to shoot the first man who crossed the threshold. The mob rather admired this proof of pluck, which always tells on a crowd, and turned to other quarters of the town. Several police were thrashed very heartily, as the obnoxious decree emanated from them, and when the dragoons were ordered out to quell the disturbance they fraternised as before. It could hardly be otherwise; the beer question was a vital one with them, and if a mechanic had cause to grumble at the advanced price, this was doubly the case with the soldiers, who had the magnificent sum of three farthings to spend daily in comforts.

This was sufficient for the Grand Duke. His carriages had been packed in readiness during the past fortnight, and at midnight he quitted the halls of his fathers, while the residenz was in a perfect state of tranquillity, accompanied by the whole of the court. The confusion his evasion created was extraordinary; the worthy citizens stared vacantly in each other's faces at the news that their beloved prince had departed, but could not possibly account for so decided a step. A deputation was sent after him to Munich, but was not received; and then, to prevent anarchy and

confusion, it was indispensably necessary to establish a provisional government.

You may imagine how His Majesty of Prussia rubbed his hands and smiled benignantly over his champagne, upon hearing that the good citizens were playing his game so effectually. Orders were immediately despatched to the King of Bavaria to set his troops in motion, and concentrate them on the frontiers of Pumpernickel, in waiting for any eventualities. Public opinion, however, had to be respected even by despots, and the troops of the confederation were not to interfere until the whole of Germany recognised the necessity of putting an end to the republican movement.

For awhile Gürkenhof presented a pattern of propriety, and things went on even more respectably than they had prior to the Grand Duke's departure. The citizens regarded it as a point of honour to show that they were not to blame in the matter, and the innkeepers, who generally liked a revolution, as tending to a vast extra consumption of beer, began to despair. Soon, however, matters took a different and far from pleasant turn; the soldiers rebelled *en masse*, and dispersed their officers in every direction. Poor devils! they could hardly be blamed for it, as they had ever been treated like brutes. Young Vons thought nothing of boxing the ears of veterans who had fought in the war of liberation, or in degrading them to the most menial duties. The discipline had been maintained by a system of terrorism, and no wonder the troops took advantage of the opportunity to rend their odious fetters. Two or three officers who had rendered themselves peculiarly obnoxious were shot by a drum-head court-martial, and the rest, thinking this warning sufficient, fled very ignominiously in every direction.

The provisional government was weak, and could not resist the pressure from within. Hence it was forced to throw open the prison gates, and let loose the political prisoners who had been very wisely shut up for their extreme opinions. These were mostly republicans by profession, and soon gained the upper hand in the councils of the nation by flattering the people with socialistic doctrines, which they were perfectly aware could never be carried out. An agrarian law was introduced, followed by a heavy tax on capitalists, and things began to look queer. The King of Prussia rubbed his hands more and more. The fruit was nearly ripe, and he would take care it should not tumble and break to pieces in the fall.

The liberation of the *têtes montées* led to the overthrow of the provisional government, and with it the loss of all honest advisers. The republic was proclaimed, and the troops of the confederation were at liberty to march in and put down the rebellion with a strong hand. Still, no extreme measures were taken for the present. A proclamation was published through the country, warning the people against obstructing the troops, and that the blood shed would be upon their own heads. But the people had no thought for consequences: they were rioting in their new-born license, and were flattered into the belief that they were invincible. The whole of the arms-bearing population was called out; the ban and arrière-ban were formed; hurried drilling was commenced, and the people really believed they would be able to repulse a well-disciplined army, thirsting for what Sir F. Head calls "booty, beauty, and revenge."

With the republic an awful system of confiscation and extortion was initiated. A swarm of peasants was quartered in the houses of the ill-disposed, and, for the sake of humanity I am sorry to say, the Jews were scandalously ill-treated. The ignorant peasants formed the most exaggerated notions of the wealth possessed by the sons of Abraham, and got up plundering parties. Disappointed in their search for plunder, Moses being a very clever judge of the times, and apt to put his moneys in security so soon as the storm-clouds collect, they generally ended by "putting up the red cock;" in other words, setting fire to their houses and ricks. In the towns the Jews fared not a whit better. They were imprisoned until they paid heavy sums for their release, and a Jew was a sure fortune to any republican leader who could capture him. No wonder the Jews are such stanch friends of monarchy. I must confess they are shamefully treated in revolutionary times. Perhaps, however, they manage to make up for it afterwards.

But the greatest curse to which the Grand Duchy was exposed by the republic was the army of Poles and refugees that flocked in like vultures smelling carrion afar off. These gentry immediately seized the chief military commands, on the principle that among the blind a one-eyed man is a king, and plundered systematically wherever they had the slightest chance. Nothing was too hot or too heavy for them, and they displayed a talent decidedly worthy of a better cause. For a long time I considered the Poles the cleverest skirmishers and pickers up of unconsidered trifles I had ever met with, but a short while ago I was convinced of my

error. The gentry at Pumpernickel pale before a Turkish pacha, one of whom carried off forty-six pianofortes from Kertch and shipped them to Stamboul before the sailors had found time to play a hornpipe upon them with their boot-heels. I can assure you that the general notion of Turks being solemn, stately swells, whom nothing would induce to go beyond a slow walk, is very erroneous when plunder is concerned. In such a case they are wonderfully active.

When Charles arrived at Gürkenhof, that usually so pleasant residenz was a thorough city of desolation ; the grass was growing on the untended palace square ; the principal shops were closed ; and the citizens, with terror at their hearts, were parading the streets, dragging their long clattering sabres after them, and thus trying to evoke a martial spirit. The theatre had been converted into a temporary hospital, the palace was occupied by the provisional government, while the embassies, with the exception of the English, were placed at the disposal of the defenders of their country. The embassies had fled, with the exception of Sir Amyas, who had resolutely shut himself up, and defied the brigands. His wife had followed the court, and he felt considerably easier in mind as he paced up and down the banquet-halls deserted, and wished he had but a regiment of foot guards to drive all the scum to the four quarters of the winds. A deputation had waited upon him, requesting that he would place the English palace at their disposal ; but he had greeted them with a revolver, and a hint that, if they did not retire in five minutes, he should treat them as house-breakers. Nothing could be done with the impracticable old man ; he took down the arms of the embassy with his own hands, and regarded his house as his castle. The Germans, having a very profound respect for my Lord Palmerston, thought best to leave Sir Amyas at peace, and at length began to regard his presence among them as a proof of their respectability.

But Helen, to Charles's great regret, had not behaved with the same decision ; the Countess had cowed her usually brave temper, and she had followed the fortunes of the court. The *canards* which flew about in every direction soon consoled her for this step, for, were they to be believed, the most awful proceedings were taking place in Gürkenhof. Charles, therefore, reconciled his conscience by writing her a very affectionate letter, in which he told her of his being in the country, and that he had hoped to meet her. He liberated her mind from much anxiety by describing the state of the

Grand Duchy to her, and expressing his views about the threatened resistance to the Bavarians. He saw such symptoms of dissolution and weakness about the republicans that he felt sure she would be back again within a month. This letter, being handed to the Countess, and read by her to the Grand Duke, served Charles in good stead at a very awkward moment of his life.

After forming this far from flattering opinion as to the stability of the government, Charles proceeded, as in duty bound, to head quarters, to satisfy himself as to the condition of the levies. The Bavarians had by this time fought one battle, in which the patriots had been defeated, not ingloriously, but they could not withstand the charges of the bayonet. If they had possessed any leader of energy they might have held the Bavarians in check; but the Polish generals were veritable scum. All they cared for was plunder and intoxication. The troops were allowed to fight as best pleased them, and, so soon as the engagement was over, the generals placed themselves at their head again, and held fiery addresses in broken German. When the actual hard fighting took place some old sergeants of artillery assumed the leadership, but their practice was of slight service against the theories of polite warfare. As a general rule, too, each man preferred fighting on his own account, and if a tree was in the vicinity would ensconce himself behind it, and quietly pop at the soldiers.

The only exception to this mode of skirmishing was to be found among the "scythe men," a battalion of hardy mountaineers, armed with a fearful weapon. This consisted of a scythe fastened to the end of a seven-foot pole, and a reaping hook attached to the side of the blade. This was a reminiscence of the Polish war in 1830, and served to repulse cavalry charges. The scythe received the breasts of the horses, the reaping hook tore the rider from his saddle, and good-by, dragoon. Unfortunately the efficiency of this weapon was not available in the rebellion, for the Bavarians employed infantry almost entirely, and their close firing very speedily routed the scythe men.

When Charles came up with the insurgent army he found it in full retreat from the Bavarians. The confusion was terrible. Everybody who had a due regard for his carcass bolted at the first opportunity, and only the young ardent republicans were left to bear the brunt of the fight. In vain did the Polish leaders fulminate edicts against the deserters, and threaten them with unparalleled punishment.

Their own example was so glaring a lesson of cowardice that it was not surprising if the tailors and cobblers thought better of fighting, and made their way homewards as best they could.

At length the great army dwindled down to a few thousand men, chiefly insurgent soldiers and youths of the first levy; but, although they fought gallantly, they were forced to give way step by step before the inexorable march of the Bavarians. After two or three attempts to hold some villages, from which they were driven with great slaughter, they marched through Gürkenhof once more, quickened in their movements by the news that a corps d'armée, consisting of Nassau and Hessen Darmstadt troops, had entered the country in the opposite direction, and threatened to cut them off. At the same time a thick military cordon was drawn along the frontier, and the insurgents were caught like rats in a trap.

It was a melancholy sight to watch the patriots who had quitted Gürkenhof in such spirits marching again through the town, with colours trailing, blackened with powder and smoke, weary, foot-sore, and heart-sore. The citizens were true to themselves in this crisis; they tried to preserve a strict neutrality, and formed into squads to protect the town from rapine. The republicans merely laughed at them, and eased them of their firelocks, while the provisional government wisely sought safety in flight, leaving the town to the tender mercies of the Bavarians.

Not long and the soldiers marched in, treating the city as captive to the sword and bow. They shot everybody they saw in the streets, man, woman, or child, without distinction, or spitted them to the shop windows with a bayonet.* Poor Sir Amyas was a sad sufferer, for, opening his jalousies to cheer the troops and thank them for the restoration of order, a clever corporal put a minié ball through his shoulder-bone, thinking that he was about to attack the troops single-handed. Poor Gürkenhof! Those three days of Bavarian occupation taught it a severe lesson about the folly of revolution; and many a citizen's daughter, insulted and outraged by the drunken restorers of order, wished in their hearts that the republicans were only back again to revenge them.

Charley was in a very awkward position; he saw no way

* Lest my readers should imagine I am exaggerating, I will refer them to the accounts of the capture of Freyburg im Breisgau in 1848, when the Hessian troops committed horrors of which my account in the text is but a faint reflex.—L. W.

of escape out of this accursed country, and he felt at the same time an irresistible loathing for the revolutionists. But he was obliged to stay with them ; anything was better than falling into the hands of the soldiery, flushed with victory, and brutalised by success and plunder ; so he marched along bravely in the van of the republican army, which had dwindled more and more away, until scarcely two thousand remained under the black, red, gold banner. They had quitted the great high road leading down the country through fear of the new corps d'armée, and had thus allowed the Bavarians to come up. The march was most disorderly ; every man threw away his impedimenta ; many even laid down their arms, and cursed the leaders who had brought them into such a perilous condition. The few field guns they had still dragged after them were deserted, and, worn out with fatigue, almost reckless with despair, they threw themselves into the little walled town of Donsberg, determined to fight to the last, and gain that death on the battle-field which awaited them so certainly if they fell into the hands of the Bavarians. If the worst came they would try to cut their way through the enemy, and desperate men had before now effected even greater hazards than this.

So soon as the insurgents had entered the town they began to put themselves in a posture of defence, by throwing up barricades and making loop-holes through which to fire on the troops. In happier days the Grand Duke had given the Bürgerwehr of Donsberg a battery of four six-pounders, with which they satisfied their desire for playing at soldiers. These were dragged out of the market-house, two planted on either gate of the town, and then loaded with old iron, nails, &c., to give the troops a warm reception.

During the night there was no thought of sleep ; the little church was stripped of its leaden roof, which was converted into bullets, while the insurgents sought to drown dull care by breaking into the cellars and dragging out long-hoarded casks of Rhenish. Charles went to bed with very gloomy anticipations of the morrow, and bitterly repenting that he had not followed Runciman's advice. But it was too late ; he must observe a strict neutrality, and try to pass off as a harmless traveller, who had arrived accidentally at Donsberg just in the thick of the action. Perhaps that excuse might save him ; but with what longing eyes did he survey the blue outline of the Black Forest, which seemed to offer him a safe retreat if he could only once reach it !

As soon as day broke the alarm was sounded through the streets, and the boom-boom of a field-piece woke the echoes in the mountains. Charles tried to hide himself in his bedroom, and hoped to escape the action, but he was soon undeceived; a party of armed men broke in, and insisted on his coming down and firing on the troops. This was certainly a very pleasant predicament for an unoffending British citizen, but the gentle prick of a bayonet speedily stopped all his protestations, and he soon found himself in the streets, an insurrectionist *malgré lui*. It was not very agreeable work I can assure you; the barricade was scarcely four feet high, and the Bavarian guns right in front could almost be seen into, so close were they. Then every half minute a ball struck the barricade, either forcing its way through, or bounding over with a savage whizz and sough most startling to unaccustomed ears. Add to this that every now and then a revolutionist fell at Charles's feet with his head smashed to atoms, or a minié ball making a telescopic passage right through him, and my readers can easily understand Charles's feelings.

At last, however, he grew savage; the deliberate popping of the Bavarians at him roused his blood, and all his resolutions as to neutrality faded away. He seized a musket from a fallen man, along with his cartouche-box, and began blazing away as best he could. At length the violent pain in his right shoulder warned him to desist, and he found time to look round him. What was his delight at recognising a familiar face at his elbow!

"What, Marschner?" he said; "why I thought you were safe in London."

"So I ought to be, Mr. Dashwood," the other replied bitterly; "but I was a fool, and believed in the possibility of the revolution. But we have no time to waste. The place will be taken in an hour, and I presume you have no more wish than myself to be exposed to the tender mercies of the soldateska. If you like to follow me I think I can insure your safety. I am a native of Donsberg, and know every inch of ground around."

Charles gladly accepted Marschner's offer, and followed him to the church. Here his friend lifted up a large circular stone and disclosed a flight of steps. "I hardly thought," he said, "when I used to play with the sexton's son, that the knowledge of this secret passage would serve me in good stead. I have not been along it for years; but it leads to an old extra-mural monastery, whence we can reach the mountains."

He then lit a hand-lamp, and, carefully drawing the stone into its place, they marched along the passage. It seemed to be a portion of an old catacomb, for mouldering coffins lay piled in side niches, or ghastly skeletons grinned a horrible smile at the presence of strangers. But Charles was not inclined to stop and institute any archæological researches; his great desire was to put as many miles as possible between himself and the Bavarians, and he urged his comrade to increased speed.

"Chi va lontano, va sano," was his philosophic reply. "It seems to me I have forgotten my way in this confounded labyrinth. Surely it went straight on, and yet—ah, yes! I see the roof has fallen in and blocked up the passage."

Charles looked at Marschner and then at the solid wall of stone. It was too true, they were blocked in, and there did not appear much chance of extrication.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FLIGHT.

"WELL, it's no use standing and looking at the stones," said Marschner after a lengthened pause, and whistling *non più mesta* like a funereal dirge; "if we go back we shall be shot; if we go on we can only be smashed, and I prefer that death."

"But how are we to manage? I don't see what can be done except removing these stones, and they seem to have lain here for years, and to have grown firmly to each other."

"True, O my friend! but does it not strike your excellency that we could dig our way round the obstacle? We shall have to pull down a portion of this earthwork, and then perhaps we could creep round. At any rate there is no harm in trying."

"My God! what's that?" Charles suddenly shouted, at hearing a most fearful reverberation above his head, and fancying the roof was falling in to crush them.

"Oh, that's nothing! only the troops who have forced their way into the town, as I anticipated, and are now going to show what may be expected from royal mercy.

Hark ! they are quickly at work—there goes a platoon fire. I suppose they are shooting down their prisoners—a much safer way of rendering them harmless than putting them within four walls. Thank your good star, Mr. Dashwood, that you are not one of them."

" Well, but I do not see what I have gained ; it looks very much as if we should be immured here to die a living death : sooner than that I would go back and try the pity of the soldiery."

" While there's life there's hope, Mr. Dashwood ; at any rate we could not leave this passage till nightfall, for the troops will be on the alert, and patrols scattered over the country. But you need not fear starvation, just at present at least : here is bread, dried fish from the Lake of Constance, and a bottle of kirschwasser. I think we can defy the enemy for awhile."

And, thus speaking, Marschner produced these various articles from carpet-bag-like pockets, and Charles, yielding to inexorable necessity, made a very hearty meal. Then, after a cigar, which was necessary to health in this charnel-house retreat, they set to work digging out the loose earth with their hands and a bayonet, and, after three hours' incessant toil, succeeded in making a hole large enough to creep round the obstacle. Then they slowly plodded onwards, guessing at the time, and at length they stood in a low archway leading directly into the courtyard of the monastery.

But a sudden " hist " from Marschner caused Charles to sink back into the gloom. A picket was stationed in the yard, and parties were riding in repeatedly with insurgents, whom they carried bound into the interior of the buildings. For hours our two friends watched the troops in agonising suspense, and at last there seemed to be some cessation to the drinking and shouting. A sentry was placed at the doorway, and all retired for the night.

" We must manage to trip up that fellow," said Marschner ; " perhaps we may have to kill him ; but what matter ? His hands are red with the blood of my brothers, and such a death is far beneath the punishment he ought to suffer."

" No, no," Charles whispered ; " I cannot save my life at the expense of another man's. But see, we shall have no difficulty with him ; he is beginning to stagger, and if he attack that bottle for another hour with the same ardour he displays at present, we can overpower him without difficulty."

The worthy Bavarian, brought up from his mother's

breast on the harmless beer of his country, had now reached the home of the potent kirschwasser, which soothed his injured feelings so well that he never rested till he had emptied the bottle. After an insane attempt to keep upright, and persuade himself into the belief that he *was* all right, he gradually collapsed into a corner, and his heavy stertorous breathing soon proved that he was dreaming—mayhap of the blessed season when the bock-bier invigorates the exhausted palate of the “Bayerischer Land Soldat.”

The fugitives emerged from their hiding-place, and noiselessly crept past the sentry, Marschner taking up his carbine, as it might possibly be useful *en route*. Within a quarter of an hour they were rapidly ascending a mountain path, which only Marschner’s practised eyes could detect, so overgrown was it with fern and juniper. At length they arrived at a small collection of huts, Marschner recommending great caution, as the troops might have reached the spot already. They skirted the village, climbing over hedges and leaping ditches, until they found themselves in safety, and were resting from their exertions when Charles heard a smothered groan from an adjoining coppice.

“Marschner, there is a wounded man close by; let us see whether we can afford him any relief.”

They forced their way through the coppice in the direction whence the groans proceeded, and at length found an officer lying on his back and bleeding terribly.

“Ah bah!” said Marschner doggedly; “’tis an enemy; let him die—what care we for his life?”

“You forget,” Charles replied earnestly, “that I was not in any way engaged in this cursed revolution; and I regret, for your own sake, that it has produced such unchristian feelings in you. But my course is clear; I cannot allow this gentleman to bleed to death, and will try with God’s help to offer him relief.”

He then stooped down, while Marschner muttered something about infernal folly, and applied the spirit-flask to the officer’s lips. He gradually recovered from his swoon, and murmured in a faint voice, “Thanks, thanks; there are, then, some Christians left in this accursed country.” Charles succeeded in getting him into a sitting posture with his back against a fir tree, and examined his wound. It was a fearful gash in the thigh, apparently made with a scythe, and the bright, clear blood which jettied from it showed that some artery had been severed. Charles took his hand-

kerchief from his pocket, converted it into an impromptu tourniquet, and fastened it securely with a piece of stick. The officer gradually recovered and said,—

“ I was thrown from my horse as I was riding with despatches to General von der Heyden, and when I recovered my senses I found my ankle was terribly sprained. I was quite unable to move, and sat patiently waiting for assistance. It came, but had been better away. A party of scythe men, flying from Donsberg, came up, and, on my asking them to conduct me to the nearest house, one of them stabbed me as you see. They then dragged me into this coppice and left me to die. Such are the bitter fruits of revolution.”

“ You must remember, sir, that these men had been exasperated by barbarity, and the conduct of your troops as they marched through the country was sufficient to decide the insurgents in giving no quarter. But you cannot remain here; unfortunately I am compelled to fly myself; but I will find the time to carry you to an adjacent cottage. Come, Marschner, lend a hand, and we will remove the gentleman.”

Marschner obeyed, though with a very ominous scowl, and crossing hands they formed a litter, on which they bore the wounded officer to the village. They propped him up against the door of the priest’s house, and, after waking the echoes with a series of astounding taps, left him to be sheltered.

“ Thank you, my good fellow!” said the officer, gratefully squeezing Charles’s hand; “ you have saved my life, and I will not forget you. In any difficulty apply to Captain von Hergenhahn, on the general’s staff, and I will prove your friend. But hark! the tattoo is sounding below; the pursuit will commence very speedily, so I commend you to God, for I am powerless to check the infuriated passions of the soldiers.”

Charles and Marschner set out again on their travels, and did not stop until they reached a charcoal-burner’s hut in the centre of a dense forest, where they felt sure of safety. Indeed, the mention of their being compromised in the late revolution was sufficient safeguard for them, and the honest charcoal-burners would have died sooner than betray them. Through their widely extended communications, the earliest news of the movement of the troops was conveyed to the fugitives, and they remained in comparative safety until the heat of the pursuit was over.

Under different circumstances Charles would have heartily enjoyed his present domicile. There was something so wild and fascinating about the swarthy charcoal-burners, and at night, when the fires blazed up, the scene would have won Retzch's heart. Nor was there any want of provisions; the Grand Ducal forests contained an almost inexhaustible supply of roebuck, hares, and bustards, and the charcoal-burners had no hesitation about helping themselves. As a beverage they had plenty of kirschwasser of their own distilling, and a glorious spring of icy cold water bubbled up close to their hut.

Here the fugitives remained some three weeks, till news reached them that the troops were gradually closing in, and intended to search the forests thoroughly. Their host suggested immediate flight, and told them they would be safe in the Black Forest at any rate. He would lead them over the frontier by paths on which no gendarme had ever been seen, and they could thence work their way down to republican Switzerland. This was the only feasible scheme for escape, as the gendarmes were up in every direction, thirsting for the rewards offered for the capture of republicans, and our friends set out on their travels once more. A long walk through the densest forest, a bed on the heather, and a breakfast on cold venison, and they had reached the Black Forest; but no persuasion would induce their guide to take a halfpenny for his noble protection. "His brother," he said, "was a fugitive from the troops, and God forbid that they should pay him for merely doing his duty. If ever they came across Hans Michel, and he was in want, they might help him; if not, commend ye to God!"

And the honest charcoal-burner, swinging his clubbed stick as if smashing the heads of half a dozen soldiers, walked back whistling into the forest, and disappeared speedily from sight.

In the Black Forest the fugitives received an equally hearty and generous welcome: wherever they stopped for the night a bed was provided for them in a manger, and black bread and schnapps offered them. At times they regaled on a hearty meal of trout, which is nowhere met with to such perfection as in the Black Forest.

I cannot imagine, by the way, how Mrs. Ratcliffe could hit on the unhappy idea of branding the Forêt Noir as the home of banditti. I have crossed it in every direction, spent weeks alone, wandering from one châlet to the other,

and, instead of being robbed, found great difficulty in getting the peasants to take anything for their hospitality. Perhaps this was a little more expensive than living at an hotel, for, of course, I was obliged to make presents to the children, or give the wife something to buy a ribbon or necktie when next she went down to market; but the cheapest place I ever lived in was the Vorarlberg, where I enjoyed the fat of the land during six weeks for the absurd sum of four shillings and sixpence. This was probably an adventitious circumstance, and came about in this wise. The very first peasant's house I stopped at I offered a Brabant dollar for change, and the peasant was delighted at receiving so valuable a silver coin in a country like Austria, where the principal currency is paper. He stowed away the dollar to keep company with several others in an old stocking, and then gave me a perfect handful of the most extraordinary currency in change, composed of Swiss batzen, Austrian kreuzer, but, above all, a mass of very dirty bits of paper, produced by tearing paper florins into infinitesimal parts, owing to the want of small coinage. It was perfectly impossible for me to decipher this stuff, so I fell into the habit of holding out my hand and letting the Vorarlberger help themselves in payment of their bill, and such effect had this confidence in their honesty upon them, that I thus reached Salzburg at the end of six weeks upon four shillings and sixpence. However, the landlord there soon convinced me that I had returned once more to a civilised country.

It is another puzzling circumstance how that district between Wurtemberg and Baden obtained the name of Schwarz-Wald, for, as a general rule, the Black Forest is less wooded than any other portion of the country. Here and there, it is true, patches of wood may be noticed of a deep black hue, but these are only found in certain districts, and under well-known conditions. Round the Freyburg circle the mountains are covered with every variety of foliage; but, after passing through the Höllenthal and ascending into "heaven," the true character of the Black Forest is presented to you as an undulating table-land, barren and unproductive, and intersected by extensive valleys, in which the châlets stand.

The houses have a rather Swiss character, being surrounded by wooden balconies; but, I am sorry to say, the prevalent dirt is not at all Swiss. The keeping room is generally maintained at a fierce heat by a fire continually

burning in the huge porcelain stove which occupies one side—a very necessary precaution I suppose, as the Black Forest is frequently covered by dense mists, arising from the innumerable rills that flow in every direction, but eventually combine to form the majestic Danube. The house is always built into a hill side for protection against the wind, and the cattle enter the stable by a species of drawbridge pulled up at night. The mangers, huge wooden cribs, are, by immemorial custom, handed over as sleeping berths for visitors; and there is no fear of your oversleeping yourself, for the kine eat away your bed. Take it altogether, a life in the Black Forest is very primitive and very pleasant, and so Charles found it. His only annoyance were the searching parties, for Baden had also joined in the ignoble game of man-hunting; and at last the chevy grew so hot that, for mutual protection, he and Marschner parted, after fraternally dividing their money, which had begun to run very low. He had heard nothing from the *Tricolor* for some time, and was anxious to return to his duties. Marschner cut across country to make the Rhine at Lörrach if possible, while Charles progressed slowly, viâ Schaffhausen, to the Lake of Constanz.

Did my limits permit me to describe all his adventures they would be found very curious and instructive. Poverty made him acquainted with strange bedfellows, in the shape of wandering journeymen and refugees, with whom he plodded onwards, hopeful of escape, and yet fearing to make the trial. At length he succeeded in reaching the borders of the lake, and skulked about until he met with a fisherman, who consented to set him ashore on the Swiss ground for the consideration of nearly all the money he had left. But liberty was preferable to cash at that moment, and he knew that once in safety he would have no difficulty in obtaining friends.

It was a gloomy night when Charles embarked on board the frail bark which represented the passage to safety. The wind got up very rapidly, and I can assure you a storm on the Bodensee is no joke. The fisherman lost his head, and consequently his course, and the heavy current drove them in the direction of the Austrian bank of the lake, where they found themselves in unpleasant proximity to the white coats. It was in vain attempting to escape their surveillance: a shot was fired across the bows of the fishing boat, and a galley pushed off to carry the threat into effect. Resistance was useless. The corporal fastened the boat in

tow, and they soon found themselves at the Austrian advanced station in the vicinity of Bregenz.

Charles very soon found that the game was up. His signalment tallied so exactly that it was hopeless to attempt any subterfuge; so he sought shelter in dogged silence until the captain of the guard condescended to lay down his pipe and give him a hearing. This proceeding was, however, of a very amicable nature, and Charles drew fresh hope from the excellent repast which the captain ordered to be set before him. The telegraph was set to work to decide how Charles should be disposed of, and during the time he was allowed to go about on parole. The Austrians saw that he was a gentleman, and relied implicitly in his word, and Charles was glad that he was a prisoner with them, sooner than be exposed to the tender mercies of the Bavarians.

At length the telegraph replied that Charles must be sent up under strict guard to Gürkenhof, and the Austrians parted from him with regret, for he had gained upon them by his winning ways. On going to the lake side to take boat for Constanz, Captain von Witzleben thrust a roll of florins into his hand.

"There, Mousieur : I am sorry my men will be compelled to hand you over to the Bavarians on the other side of the lake, but that money, judiciously applied, will insure kind treatment even from them. I advise you, if you have the good fortune to be tried by a military commission, to say nothing in your defence—you had better plead guilty, and the president will doubtless take your case into favourable consideration ; and, if you are condemned to be shot, why I feel sure you will face the firing party like a man. Nay, you need not try to exculpate yourself to me : I have every reason to believe you not guilty ; but unfortunately there is a strong case against you, and, if you have any friends at court, get them to intercede for you. You may get off then with ten years' imprisonment."

And, with this consolation, the captain gave Charles a military salute, and ordered them to start. On reaching Constanz the prisoner was handed over to a Bavarian guard, despatched expressly to receive the hardened malefactor, and, after being handcuffed, he was carried by train to Gürkenhof, where gratis lodgings were provided for him in the city prison. On comparison Charles would have preferred being back in Whitecross Street, but there was no help for it ; he must put up with the consequences of his

folly, and, whatever the result might prove, it would serve as a very useful hint not to engage in a revolution without first reckoning the cost.

But Charles was soon raised to an extravagant state of good spirits by finding under his soup-bowl a letter from his Helen, which the turnkey had thus smuggled in. She told him she was moving heaven and earth in his cause, and she felt sure he would be released. The Grand Duke was on his side, so was the Countess; but Sir Amyas was inexorable. Although a word from him officially would save him, that word he was determined not to utter, for in his eyes attacking a government was an unpardonable sin. She, however, intended to make one more appeal to Sir Amyas, who was very fretful from a wound he had received during the revolution. Perhaps she might succeed in moving the stern old man; if not, she had one other resource which she thought would be infallible. "Wait and hope" were her last words, and it is wonderful what an exhilarating effect they had on Charles. He turned willingly to the instruction of the prison schoolmaster, and soon found himself busily engaged in making cigar-boxes; for the Germans, wise in their generation, think that, if they are forced to maintain their prisoners, the least they can do in return is to work, and repay to some extent the cost. We sneer at the Germans, and call them unpractical, and in our wisdom allow our prisoners to be a dead weight, spending their superfluous energy in turning an idle tread-wheel, or working at the cruel crank.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

STANDRECHT.

THE Bavarians were certainly exemplifying the truth of the *vie victis*, and the process of trial, condemnation, and death was wonderfully short. For a length of time they had gone upon the Hibernian system of shooting first and inquiring into the guilt afterwards, and the interval which elapsed between the last shot of the revolutionists and the triumphant return of the Grand Duke had been profitably employed in ridding him of a vast number of democrats,

who might have proved troublesome hereafter. The prisoners were taken out to the *pelouse* behind the palace, placed in the front of their yawning grave, short shrift was allowed, and a corporal's file shot them down as coolly as if they were commemorating the 1st of September. The Grand Duke would be able to sniff the mouldering corpses of his enemies, and, as we all know, that is a sweet revenge.

But the Grand Duke, on his return, found himself a mere puppet. Instead of him, martial law ruled the country in the form of the general commanding the Bavarians. He was not a bad-hearted man, but suffered from an obliquity of mind. In actual warfare he would have thought it criminal to give no quarter, but with mere rebels the case was very different. A warning example must be instituted, and this the worthy soldier imagined could only be effected by shooting every prisoner who surrendered. Now, had this severity been practised upon the Poles and other professional revolutionists, I do not think I should have a word to say against it; but unfortunately the punishment cut two ways: while intimidating the worthy people of Pumpernickel, it drained the country of its marrow. The Poles had bolted betimes, save in some rare instances; but the prisoners were generally strong young peasants and students, who had defended the popular cause from a generous though very foolish impulse.

The Grand Duke, too, was not a bad-hearted man—far from it. He was only careless, and regarded human life in a reckless and truly royal manner. By slow degrees, however, the conviction forced itself on his mind that Germany was being coerced into good behaviour at the expense of his own country, and that perhaps it would be advisable for him to mete out punishment with his own hand. A case in which a perfectly innocent man was shot by mistake endued him with unwonted energy, and he protested against the Bavarian general's proceedings; but the instructions he had received were totally at variance with the views of the Grand Duke, and he would not risk the anger of the great rulers through any apprehension of offending a royalet. The Grand Duke then behaved in a manner worthy of his royal ancestors. He declared that if the butchery (you see his blood was up, and he used the right word without any diplomatic circumlocution) was continued—he would lay down his crown. It should never be enrolled in the pages of history that Henry Stanislaus Xaver Ernest XIX., by the

grace of God, had consented to act disgracefully for the sake of pandering to the absolutistic notions of his German co-regents.

It was wonderful what a hubbub this protest created, and the immense amount of telegraphing and protocolling that went on—to the advantage of the prisoners, for the executions were stopped until the knotty point was settled. At length, however, mercy prevailed, and the Grand Ducal prerogative was preserved intact. The high contending parties came to an agreement by virtue of a compromise—that great safety-valve in matters of litigation. It was settled that the prisoners henceforward should be tried by a court-martial; but the Grand Duke was not to be allowed to alter its decision in any way. Having thus salved his conscience, the Grand Duke washed his hands of the matter, and, though the executions went on as usual, they were performed with a semblance of law, and what more could the prisoners expect?

Charles was beginning to grow uncomfortable at the delay in deciding his fate: if he was to be shot they had no right to keep him in suspense—anything was better than that. But the court-martial went on with admirable speed, thus giving a worthy example to the dilatory civilian courts, and Germans to their surprise found themselves condemned to be shot after scarcely a fortnight's imprisonment. It was manifestly unfair. Had they been brought before a criminal court the trial would have dragged on its slow length for at least a couple of years, and they might have a chance of being forgotten. Charles was therefore warned to prepare for trial the next week, and awaited with some curiosity, not unmixed with apprehension, his first appearance before a court-martial.

The court sat in a ward of the prison, and free admission was allowed to the public. Hence, when Charles was brought before it, he was greeted with a buzz, partly of compassion, partly of defiance. He had not the remotest idea what evidence the prosecution would bring against him, for he was not aware that prisoners had been reprieved for the express purpose of bearing testimony against any one the court wished to crush. Three officers performed the functions of judge and jury, and evidently regarded the matter in a very offhand manner; for they were joking and talking together, which they only interrupted to have a fixed and rather impudent stare at the prisoner, who was brought into court between two gendarmes after they

had very ostentatiously loaded their muskets before his face.

The trial assumed the form of a cross-examination, in which the president performed the functions of counsel, and you may be sure took care not to put any question which could exculpate the prisoner. It was, in truth, a mere farce, like too many other proceedings in this world, where law is twisted into the defence of the grossest injustice and illegality.

"The prisoner is Mr. Charles Dashwood, an 'Englishman and revolutionist,'" the president said, turning to his confrères; then to Charles, "I see, by evidence now before me, that in your own country you were leagued with the worst rebels, and engaged on a firebrand paper called the *Tricolor*. Is that correct?"

"I should wish that paper to be put in evidence, to prove that it did not represent such feelings."

"We possess quite sufficient proof. Crier, call M. Herman Kurz."

And that worthy gentleman, now branded with the mark of a common informer, stepped into the witness-box, and fluently described all he knew about the *Tricolor*, with a great deal drawn from his own fertile imagining.

"Do you wish to ask this witness any questions?" said the president *pro forma*.

"None," was the reply.

The president was apparently highly delighted at the rapid manner the trial was proceeding. "Crier, call Wilhelm Lederkirke."

A witness then stepped into the box, whom Charles fancied he had seen before, but where it was impossible for him to decide. He, too, tripped off his évidé, that he had seen Charles at Donsberg, armed and evidently firing on the troops. Suddenly it occurred to Charles that this man had been one of those who dragged him from his room to the luckless barricade, and he therefore inquired whether he had not been forced into taking part in the revolution. But the witness had been too well tutored, and his *non mi ricordo* was worthy of another celebrated court-martial. Charles, clearly seeing the bias, determined on not asking another question, but let the trial go on as the president pleased.

Formal proof then being given of the prisoner's capture and delivery to the Bavarians, the president asked, in the same monotonous matter-of-course tone which had charac-

terised the whole of the proceedings, "Prisoner, have you anything to say in your defence?"

Charles had a great deal to say, but knowing the utter futility he merely bowed. A paper was handed up to him, bearing in pencil, "Call me as witness, Von Hergenhahn." Charles, therefore, stated that he had a witness who would prove, he thought, the opinion he formed of the affair, and Captain von Hergenhahn limped up to the tribune after exchanging a sympathising glance with the prisoner. He gave his evidence in an impassioned manner, saying that he owed his life to Mr. Dashwood, and felt sure that he was far from sympathising with the rebels; and, though he might possibly have been guilty of extreme folly, any criminal idea was far from him. "And I will take this opportunity of handing Mr. Dashwood the handkerchief with which he stopped the effusion of blood when the merciless russians had left me to die. Whatever be the result of this day's proceedings, I solemnly assert that I believe Mr. Dashwood is innocent."

This earnest appeal had a marked effect upon the audience, which they proceeded to express until the president threatened to clear the court. He then turned to his colleagues, merely saying, "You have heard the evidence: is the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

Hardly a minute's deliberation and they unanimously said, "GUILTY!"

The president turned briskly to Charles and said, "Mr. Dashwood, you have been found guilty, on the very clearest evidence, of having borne arms against the Grand Duke. As an Englishman you must have been well aware of the consequences, and were probably prepared for them. My duty is very simple, however: I have to sentence you to DEATH. I have taken into due consideration the favourable opinion expressed of you by Count von Hergenhahn, which will so far modify the judgment upon you that you will enjoy the honorary distinction of being shot, instead of hanging, to which as a civilian you were exposed. As a further proof of the merciful consideration of the court, I will grant you till the day after to-morrow to settle your worldly affairs. Jailer, bring up the next prisoner."

Ugh! have you ever felt, reader, the sensation of the first plunge into the sea on a cold day, the whizzing of the water in your ears, and the giddiness produced by the sudden shock? Such was Charles's feeling as he heard the death sentence passed upon him. To be so suddenly cut

off in the prime of life for an offence of which he felt himself innocent (for firing at the troops he only regarded as an act of self-defence) was fearful. He was noticed to turn deadly pale as the verdict fell upon his ear, and convulsively clutched at a glass of water on the bench before him. He, however, speedily recovered, and with a bow quitted the court to make way for other victims to this unhallowed mockery of laws.

So soon as he was death's own Charles experienced a considerable difference in his treatment; nothing was now too good for him, and the Germans, in their materialism, thought the only way of keeping his pluck up was by good feeding and drinking. But Charles, to their surprise, took no heed of such things; he merely asked for pen and ink, and calmly set about arranging his worldly affairs in preparation for the worst, although hope still whispered in his ears that Helen would not desert him at this awful moment.

He was not deceived. So soon as the news of his sentence reached the court, Helen did not even waste time in fainting (which she would have been quite justified in doing), but ran off to Sir Amyas to implore him to intercede for his nephew. I am glad to say that the old gentleman was considerably moved by her earnest prayers, and, for the first time for many years, a feeling of pity pervaded his breast as he saw the fair girl kneeling at his feet, wringing her hands, and pouring forth all her innocent oratory in behalf of her beloved Charles. But Sir Amyas was placed in a very awkward position; it was so utterly against his principles even tacitly to give the revolution the appearance of his sanction by interceding for a prisoner, and, Brutus-like, he thought he should compromise himself by interfering in behalf of his own nephew. Hence he was determined not to apply officially, but at last wrote a note to the general, in which he urged Helen's prayer. This note he insisted on Helen delivering herself, and thus she might save her Charles. With a hearty prayer for her success, he bade her God speed, and shut himself up in his room, refusing to be comforted, and trying to persuade himself that he was doing his duty. It was, in truth, a bitter blow to his pride that his nephew should have thus tarnished the unsullied chivalry of his family. For centuries the Dashwoods had been celebrated for their fidelity to their sovereign. One Dashwood had sold his estates for King Charles, another had followed King James into exile, and now a recreant Dashwood had sanctioned by his presence

a revolution against a crowned head! And yet, strange to say, he began to feel a much stronger degree of love for Charles, now that he was so nearly losing him, than ever he had done before. It gnawed at his heart that with Charles the Dashwoods would, in all probability, die out; for his own son—if he were his own, which he doubted—was sickly and very unlikely to live. And the old man, who had spent a long and wicked life in scoffing at religion and reading Voltaire, now turned to his Bible, and found enduring comfort in the blessed pages of Revelation.

Helen ran back to the Countess, and beseeched the Grand Duke to interfere and save Charles's life for her sake, and for that of his own daughter, whom she had saved from perhaps worse peril; but that unlucky etiquette which sears the heart and pacifies the conscience interposed in this instance. The Grand Duke could not apply to the Bavarian general to release a prisoner, for he was on the high ropes as regarded him, and would not, for any consideration, abate one jot of his dignity. He, however, strongly advised Helen to apply herself, and felt no doubt that she would succeed. To effect this he offered her a court carriage, which, in his eyes, was a certain means of gaining her end. Helen, therefore, had no resource but to drive out to camp, and with wild remembrances of Colonel Kirk at Taunton coursing through her brain, she set out on the mission upon which Charles's life and her own happiness depended.

On reaching the camp the court carriage produced the desired effect, and she crossed the lines without any opposition. She was speedily ushered into the general's hut, and found him busily engaged at his writing-table signing death warrants, and handing them over to a staff officer. However, at the sight of a young lady in tears, he quickly ordered the officer to retire, and awaited patiently Helen's communication. It is needless for me to dwell upon all the arguments she used; the best, I believe, were her tears, which no brave man can resist. He raised her at once from the ground, and placed her in a chair; then said, with an attempt at severity, in which he lamentably failed,—

“Pish, pish! the whole world seems infatuated with this Monsieur Dashwood. I have just had my aide-de-camp Hergenhahn here, threatening to lay down his commission unless I release him; but I cannot see any reason why I should rescind the judgment of the court. It is a very serious matter to interfere with the president,

for I have been in the habit of leaving these matters solely in his hands."

"But Charles—Mr. Dashwood I mean—was not able to call any witnesses in his defence. I have here letters he wrote to me during the whole progress of the revolution, which will prove that he was merely an observer, and took no active part in the sad excesses which have ruined this fair country."

And my cautious Helen here handed in the letters with certified translations. The general rapidly ran over them, and his features grew brighter. He had now an excuse for tempering justice with mercy, and was only too glad to avail himself of it; but military reserve must be maintained.

"Well, young lady," he said, "these documents certainly throw a favourable light on Mr. Dashwood's conduct, and I am disposed to believe that he acted from folly rather than malice. These letters certainly do not agree with the character given of him by the police agents, and I had every reason for believing that he was here as the recognised missionary of the revolutionary party in England. Come, I will weigh the matter carefully in my mind, and let you know the result. Perhaps I may be inclined to let him off for a few years' imprisonment."

"Oh, sir, be generous! Think of his youth—his inexperience. I am ready to promise that this shall be the last time he ever behaves in such a foolish way."

"Well, well, a young and pretty lady is the best possible preventive against a man going astray. But what does Sir Amyas say in the matter? Surely he would interfere in the affair, when his own nephew is concerned. His silence is an evil augury."

Helen blushed at her forgetfulness—she had been so engaged in her own endeavours to liberate her Charles by her eloquence, that she had neglected to give Sir Amyas's note to the general. But this fault she now speedily repaired, and eagerly watched the effect produced by the communication. It exceeded her most sanguine expectations; the general brightened up at once, and saying, "Come, my young lady, this is a valuable document—you shall hear from me to-night, and you may be sure the news will be good," he led her to her carriage, and, with a heart brimful of happiness, Helen returned to court.

Strange is the human heart! Sir Amyas had been able to effect by two lines what all Helen's artless eloquence had failed in doing. His Excellency had offered, in return for

Charles's liberation, to procure the general the Grand Cross of the Pommeranze, which he was quite certain the Grand Duke would not refuse to his long friendship.

This turned the scale: another cross on his *brochette* subverted all the general's platitudes about justice, and the necessity of instituting a terrible example. Surely the multitude of dead men, shrieking to heaven for justice on their oppressors, had sufficiently vindicated the majesty of the law. By six o'clock Helen held in her hands a full discharge for Charles, accompanied by a note from the general, in which he expressed his gratification at being able to meet her wishes, and a hint that perhaps she would like to bear the result herself to Mr. Dashwood. From that moment Helen was a confirmed royalist, and thought the Bavarians the very best troops in the world.

To use a favourite expression of the penny-a-liners, we will "drop a veil" over the affecting meeting between the lovers. No effort on my part could come up to the exquisite glow of happiness Helen felt at her Charles being saved; and the young man, though fully grateful to her for her exertions on his behalf, took it so much as a matter of course, that my readers would only be disgusted if I described the scene. Imagine these transports over, and the gloomy cell illuminated, as if by the midday sun, upon Helen's flashing in; imagine the turnkey scowling at the loss of a prisoner, and yet half glad that Charles was spared; imagine Helen giving vent to showers of tears, and then blaming herself for her folly, and after that we will proceed to the common sense portion of the interview.

"Well, Helen," said Charles, seating her on his knee, and playing with her long tresses, "there can be no objection on your part to marry me at once. Let us go to England; I have a comfortable income, and we can live respectably."

Helen shook her head sadly. "I have told you so often in my letters, dearest Charles, that I never can be your wife until all doubts are cleared up as to my birth. I am convinced, it is true, that Julie's story is correct—she could have no interest in deceiving me; but it shall never be said that Helen Mowbray took advantage of your gratitude for a slight service she has done you, and which you so kindly exaggerate, to trap you into a marriage which would only bring disgrace on you."

Most ingenuous were the arguments which Charles made use of to induce Helen to rescind her judgment; but she

stood firm in the consciousness of her rectitude. At length Charles declared—with a violent oath, I am sorry to say—that he would never rest until he had found the *soi-disant* Count, and torn the papers from him.

"And if I succeed, Nelly dearest," he added, giving her a sly squeeze and a demonstrative hug, "I suppose then you will not object to be my wife?"

"Why should I attempt any affectation? You know, dearest, that my life happiness is bound up in yours; and it has cost me a violent struggle to keep on the right path. 'Wait and hope' must still be our motto. But you will have a difficult search. When I last heard from Julie she was going to Turkey after the villain, and she has never written since. Fortunately I have nearly £200 saved, without counting Mr. Worthington's present, and how could it be better employed than in insuring my happiness, and yours, I hope, as well?"

Charles soon after quitted the prison, and took up his quarters at the best hotel until he could leave the country, which, under the circumstances, was very desirable. He had hardly entered his room when his old friend Pelham came in, the bearer of a quantity of letters from England, and made him a proposition which wonderfully assisted him in his search after the Count.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DOWN THE DANUBE.

"WELL, my boy," said Mr. Pelham affably, as he held out his hand to Charles, "rather a narrow squeak of it, eh? You have had a sharp lesson about playing with edged tools, and I don't think you'll go fighting again about matters that do not concern you one jot. You see what comes of associating with democrats—a set of infernal cads, who never had a father, and seem spawned from republican books. But now I have an offer which I think will suit you. Of course you'll cut and run as soon as possible, and I can put you in the way of combining the *utile* with the *dulce*. Spraggs, the queen's messenger, has broken down here with important despatches for Sir Stratford: they must be sent on at once. What do you say, my boy, about taking his place?"

"By Jove, Pelham, you have offered me the very thing I wanted. Business calls me to Turkey, and I gladly accept your offer."

"Well, I don't think you'll come to grief in that country. But remember, don't try your revolutionary experiences ou there—the Turks have a sad knack of bowstringing troublesome people, and you won't have anybody to intercede for you if you play any tricks. Come, here's £50 for you; dra at Stamboul another £50, and come back here as soon your mission is over; but there is no hurry—you can atten to your own business, of course, before government's. Bu I will leave you now to read your letters, and come back in a couple of hours to give you the letter-bag. Ta-ta."

And the ingenuous youth walked off to represent diplomatic England at a milliner's, while Charles began making up the long arrears of his correspondence. As usual, it was of a chequered description; but the most important news to us is that the *Tricolor* had gone to the dogs, and there was small prospect of Charley's back salary being paid. There was, too, a letter from Runciman, caustic as usual, and full of scandal about his fellow authors: he stated, however, that he had strong hopes of securing a government appointment before long, and, if so, he could probably make satisfactory arrangements for Charles. He was very mysterious, of course; but there was a gleam of selfish good-nature expressed in his wish that Charles would save his neck, and return in safety to his mourning De Thou. The other letters were principally from tailors and bootmakers, who will find us out wherever we go, and have always a large bill to make up, for which our little account would be acceptable. These, of course, were torn up; but Mr. Worthington's letter from Australia was laid by for careful consideration hereafter.

Charley took a hurried farewell from Helen in the palace gardens, and, after great persuasion, was induced to accept £100 to aid in the prosecution of the search, which, as Helen justly said, was a joint-stock business; and, with repeated promises to return to Gürkenhof at once, so soon as the Count had been found, and to be a good boy, and take care of himself, the young gentleman proceeded to dine with Pelham, nor did his appetite appear to have suffered by the parting. The next morning he was off by the first train to Frankfort, heartily glad to notice the prison tower rapidly receding from view.

Helen in the meanwhile received a sudden summons to

Paris, which she was obliged to obey, although that city was so full of bitter reminiscences. The Princess had carried her views of woman's rights a little too far, and had ended by rousing the tiger in her husband. The clouds had gathered on the horizon very rapidly, and perhaps the lady's conduct was not altogether quite correct. At any rate Prince Rubelskoff was so annoyed with her, that he dared to strike her during a violent dispute, in which she insisted on riding in the Bois with the Vicomte de la Blague, and her husband opposed it. But the blow very nearly cost him dearly; for the Princess drew a dagger upon him, and evinced herself such a spitfire, that the Prince was glad to consent to a separation. The Princess received a magnificent allowance, and felt happier than she had done for years: all she wanted was Helen, and she must come. The Grand Duke joining in her prayers, and hoping that Helen's presence would prevent any *esclandre*, which was only too much to be apprehended from such a strong-minded young woman, Helen started for Paris, and was soon enjoying, in spite of herself, all the delights of that frivolous city.

From Frankfort Charles booked himself direct to Pesth, in order to catch the steamer, and the sixty hours' confinement he endured in the train fully accounted to him for Captain Spraggs' illness. I think no torture can be conceived equal to a long unbroken railway journey on the continent. You are fated apparently to perish by the worst form of anhypnia, for no sooner are your eyes closed to snatch a very welcome but most uncertain sleep, than some brutal gendarme tears open the door, and insists on seeing your *reise legitimation*, his euphemistic periphrasis for a passport. With Charles the Austrians were more than usually severe, for it was peculiarly galling to them to have his signalment entered in their pocket-books, and yet be prevented laying hands on him by the omnipotent ambassadorial seal at Gürkenhof, not to mention the despatch-box, with its mystic O. H. M. S. in gold letters on the lid. However, his wretched journey came to an end at last like other miseries, and a night's rest at the excellent Hôtel d'Angleterre on the quay at Pesth restored him to a healthy condition.

Of course his evening was devoted to visiting that wondrous result of engineering skill, the suspension-bridge, which was put to so rude a trial during the Hungarian revolution, by being crossed by three armies in succession

during one day. For the honour of old England I am proud that it so nobly stood the test. It is certainly a very magnificent object as it spans the broad Danube, and to those of my readers who have not seen it I cannot describe it better than by advising them to imagine Hammersmith bridge, which everybody has seen, at thrice its present size and dimensions. The bridge had been torn up by the rebels, and had not been repaired on Charles's visit. Hence he could not go over to Buda, and have a nearer glance at the spot where the Hungarians had displayed so much bravery; so he went back to his hotel, and consoled himself for his loss by a bottle of very excellent Tokayer.

The next morning he was on board the Imperial Royal Steamboat, hastening at full speed down the river. The scenery soon after leaving Pesth became fearfully uninteresting, consisting of interminable plains on either side the river, only enlivened rarely by a horseman galloping after the herds, and startling the echoes with his wild yells. But the scene on board the steamer was well worthy of observation; and on no other line of steamers is such a motley group of company congregated. Austrian officers, Jews, Moldavians, Servians, Hungarians, merchants, chapmen—all made a strange mass, united in one common sentiment of feeding, for which ample opportunity was offered on board.

And here Charles had his first chance of being on familiar terms with live princesses, who crowded the boat, and behaved with an affability not common with personages of that exalted rank. It is true that Charles had some difficulty in following their remarks, for they spoke execrable French, but made up for that defect by laughing most immoderately at their own fun. Altogether they were very free and jocose young ladies, and Charles was almost guilty of the high treason of imagining that he had met some of them before in the purlieus of the Haymarket. It struck him that they might have paid a little more attention to their persons without detriment, and their dirty faces and hands furnished a curious contrast to their massive jewellery and magnificent velvet and satin dresses; but he was of a charitable turn of mind, and the difficulty he found in procuring water on board the vessel for the purposes of ablution reconciled him to this inattention on their part. Still there was no excuse for the highly improper quiproquos with which they garnished their conversation; still less for Charles, who had so lately parted from Helen, when

he laughed at them; but they could not talk about anything else, poor creatures! Their education had been sadly neglected. Paris was the capital of the world in their idea, and Bucharest the next city. They had heard of such a place as London, but they believed it was only fit for the *canaille*. A little French varnish rubbed over native coarseness and immorality—such is the principal distinction of a Moldavian princess. But they are princesses, and to such much must be forgiven.

In conversing with a Hungarian officer Charles gained some interesting information about these “unclean brutes,” as the stranger ungallantly termed them. It appeared that when at home they lived in filthy huts, into which we should be disinclined to thrust a dog, and their only occupation was running into debt as far as they could get credit; they pigged at home for nine months in the year, and the other three were spent in a trip to Vienna or Pesth, where they made up for home discomforts. As for their morality I may as well describe it in the officer’s own words, “Every husband has another wife, every wife another husband.” On hearing this character Charles thought it advisable to cease his investigations, but made up for it by a very vigorous flirtation with the prettiest of the princesses, thereby raising an intense scowl on the face of a fat Servian major, who found himself thus unexpectedly cut out. His silver epaulettes stood no chance against Charles’s handsome clean face. Indeed, the whiteness of his skin created a sensation almost equal to that which Bayle St. John declares the sight of his did on Wardy (*vide* his “Two Years in a Libyan Family”).

But the princesses were sadly neglected as soon as the steamer commenced winding through that magnificent scenery which begins some six hours before reaching Orsova. The young ladies could not at all understand what possessed the English Adonis, that he suddenly turned from their amply developed charms to gaze with such rapt attention on the every-day face of nature. How could the sight of brown masses of rock and trees afford any gratification when they were sitting by? Truly the English were outer barbarians, and the Servian major recovered his good spirits in proportion as Charles relaxed in his attentions.

In truth, that small piece of water, only too short in its duration, contains the most exquisite river scenery to be found in Europe. The startling change from flat, level

puttas to towering masses of rock, which threaten to bar the passage, is like the change of decorations in a fairy piece, and you watch with eager eye the traces of that great nation which planted the first footstep of civilisation on the banks of the Danube. It will repay the monotonous voyage from Pesth, I can assure you, and any routine traveller desirous of a new sensation should run down as far as Orsova if he wants to see European nature in one of her grandest and boldest scenes. Beyond Orsova the only spot worth notice is the Iron Gate with Trajan's Bridge, and that only on account of its reputation. I have been over much more dangerous places in an Oxford "funny," but the Germans make an intense pother about it, and even the Moldavian princesses grew silent, and turned, if possible, a little more yellow, until the danger was safely left behind.

The greatest annoyance of these imperial steamers is the shameful want of sleeping accommodation. While the saloon is magnificent in the extreme, gaily decorated with looking-glasses and papier-mâché pictures—while the living is very decent and plentiful, the sleeping berths are a standing disgrace to the Austrians. The ladies' cabin is directly opposite the gentlemen's, and, owing to the crowd always congregated, the doors are left open, allowing an uninterrupted view of both, highly suggestive of morality. But the ladies of the Principalities prefer lying in bed as a rule, smoking cigarettes and drinking nips of rum: they get up to the public meals from compulsion, but return to their beds immediately they are over, and indulge altogether in practices which would make a pure-minded Englishwoman stare, I rather fancy.

Charles, however, was not fated to have his modesty exposed to such a trying ordeal, or I am afraid he would have never reached Stamboul, but have run off after some fair princess to Jassy or Bucharest; perhaps, though, it might have cured him entirely. However, as a queen's messenger he was entitled to a separate cabin on the middle deck, and was thus saved from temptation.

After passing Orsova there is nothing to see except watching the Wallachian guard turn out to salute the Austrian flag, which is certainly a funny sight. The cordon houses are generally occupied by three men and a boy, under a corporal, who turn out with sticks to present arms, for only one musket is allowed to each guard, and the frantic attempts of the unhappy non. comm. to dress

his men, in which he always failed, were highly diverting. At last the steamer reached Galatz, and the passengers going further were transferred to a small sea-going steamer belonging to the Austrian Lloyd, and a perfect picture of wretchedness, uncleanliness, and discomfort.

The principal food supplied on board these vessels is caviare, washed down with mastic, to me the two most horrible things in existence: the cookery is a mélange of Italian and Turkish, and I think I need say no more against it. Nothing in the shape of scenery compensates for the food: you pass plenty of Bulgarian villages, growing more dirty and wretched the nearer you approach Turkey, and the company on board is generally more mixed, if possible, than on board the river steamer. Charles had hardly ever passed a more wretched time, and the sight of the Sulina Passage made him feel quite despondent. The multitude of wrecks, almost choking up the passage, were a striking proof of Russian selfishness, and he could not understand how England could suffer so magnificent a water communication to become practically useless. At present we are supposed to be changing all this, but I doubt greatly whether a commission will ever be able to conquer the Austrian *vis inertiae*. What does she care whether Bulgaria becomes the granary of the world? She can gain nothing by it, and her monopoly of the river will be assailed. The treatment of the French steamer *Le Lyonnais* last summer is, I think, sufficient evidence of the honest intentions of Austria in the matter.

At length the steamer cleared its tortuous way into the Black Sea, and had a quick and pleasant passage to Varna, a place which Charles little thought would become so soon the graveyard of the British army. At that time it was a harmless-looking, very dirty town: it had been fortified once upon a time, but now the guns were honeycombed, and resting on broken carriages, and the whole place was a picture of abject decay—a fine moral type of the Ottoman empire, shining as much as whitewash could make it externally—within festering corruption and rottenness. The Euxine behaved on this occasion in a manner worthy of its name: the most timid passengers had no excuse for being sick, and on the third morning the good ship *Bratwurst* steamed majestically through the castles of Europe and Asia, and the magnificent Bosphorus lay expanded before our traveller's astonished gaze.

I can well understand people describing their impressions

du voyage on passing through the Bosphorus, and that no traveller can neglect the opportunity for hyperbole; indeed, the Bosphorus must draw out the latent poesy in a fellow, even if it lie buried full fathom five. At the sight of such a magnificent passage leading to Stamboul the traveller is unconsciously affected by a sympathy for the Turks: he cannot believe the stories told of them, or that brutality and vice can lurk in such a lovely spot. He should remember that even in Paradise the serpent was able to display its devilry. What a pity that such a country should be still in the hands of a nation which is a standing insult to Europe, and which, having once asserted its position by brute force, is now regarded as a political necessity!

But none of these considerations disturbed Charles as the *Bratwurst* speeded down the Bosphorus, impelled by the powerful current. At that time the Turks were very much down in the market, and no one anticipated the factitious importance they would acquire so soon. English publishers civilly declined voyages and travels in that over-visited land, probably because every traveller adhered to the same beaten track, and had the same fabulous story to tell about his secret visit to the seraglio or the Mosque of Aya Sofia. The same amount of intrigue was going on at the embassies. England, France, Austria, or Russia, by turns reached the top of the ladder, and believed in the omnipotence of their influence until a rude fall undeceived them. The Turks were as lavish as ever of promises which they never intended to fulfil, but received with both hands the bribes offered them, allowing no feeling of honour to interfere with their own profit.

The view of Pera from the Golden Horn is a fitting lesson of the probable fate of Constantinople. In the centre towers the huge Russian embassy, suggestive of the dominion that nation is ever striving to obtain, and of its power. The huge stone building dominating the view is an emblem of the colossal nation, lavish of expense when any purpose is to be served, and striving by barbaric pomp to impose on the Oriental nations. But in the midst of all the burly and brattle Sir Stratford Canning moved serenely onwards in his honesty of purpose, inflexibly keeping one object in view, the maintenance of the dignity and greatness of England. The Russians might display their magnificence, and point meaningly to Sebastopol in support of their usurped authority; but they smarted at the thought that all their guns and troops could not overthrow that simple

old man, who foiled their most finely spun intrigues, and broke through the tangled web with the sturdy independence of a British gentleman. No wonder that Sir Stratford was so detested; no wonder that the continental press teemed with anecdotes of his haughty demeanour and tendency to quarrel; the right man was in the right place for once, and, thank God! our ministers recognised his value, and could not be induced to recall him; and so Sir Stratford went on his way, seeing the venom accumulate around him, but careless of personal danger and difficulty, in the conscious pride that he was defending the dignity of his country, and maintaining his own independence at the same time.

Still I do not wish to assert that Lord Stratford is the pleasantest man in the world with whom to do business. I have known many officers, brave as their sword, who would sooner lead a forlorn hope than endure a quarter of an hour's interview with the envoy. There is something fearfully repelling about him, and I can well understand the story that the Sultan behaves like an overgrown girl, by crying for three hours, after a private conference with his Excellency. His temper is iniquitous, I will allow, and his pride is somewhat greater than that of Lucifer; but at the same time he is a great man, and I cannot be surprised that he should be imbued with a knowledge of his greatness. If Sir Stratford lived in a wooden hut in the worst part of Galata, the Turks would regard it with greater awe than the magnificent stone palace of the Russian.

The anchor had scarcely dropped ere Charley chartered a kaik, and, merely saying "Galata-da," lay down at his ease in the stern, speculating as to the possibility of reaching dry land without a ducking. But the crafty kaikji had scarcely pulled ten yards from the vessel ere he made some very significant motions as to payment. Charles simply told him to go on, and he would pay him on landing. The boatman shook his head in the affirmative apparently, yet did not move from the spot. His cry was for paras, and Charles was not inclined to give in. Seeing, however, that the kaikji was stationary, my hero very quietly pulled out a cigar and smoked with the greatest deliberation. The boatman was puzzled, and began a long harangue, of which Charles understood nothing but "paras." At length he produced an Austrian zwanziger, which he showed the boatman. "*Yok, yok,*" the kaikji began; "*iki, iki, on grusch,*" and gesticated violently with his fingers to show

how much he wanted. It was an exorbitant charge, for a Turk only pays a piastre to be pulled from Stamboul to Scutari; but Charles, wearied of the discussion, laid the money in the boat before him, and repeated "Galata-da." The boatman clutched at the money; but a sharp rap on the knuckles reprimanded him, and effected a wonderful change. He became as civil as possible, and rowed away to Galata, where our hero landed on a rotten quay, covered with mud and artful holes, in which infidels could break their necks. The stench, too, was terrific, and Charles with a heavy heart entered that whited sepulchre which romancers call the fairest of European cities.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

THE first thing Charles had to do on landing was to deliver his despatches, and for that purpose he selected one of the countless tribe of interpreters who flocked round him to show him the way to the embassy. The walk along Galata to Tophaneh, and thence to Pera, was well adapted to sicken him of Constantinople; and even if he at times strove to divert his attention from the filth and stench by observing the strange scenes going on all around him, he was soon warned by the grunting of the hammals, as they bore heavy casks along, or by the creaking of the boards fastened on the backs of the horses, that he must provide for his own safety. A Turk is the most obstinate animal in the world, and would not get out of the way of an emperor; and as for fancying you could gain your object by behaving with civility to them, you might as well attempt the Irish operation of "whistling jigs to a milestone."

And yet to the observer there is something remarkable in a walk along Galata. It is only a pity that the picturesque and the dirty will always be coupled together. But if you can shut your nose to the stench, and your ears to the smothered "Jawurs" that assail you, an hour may be very profitably spent in the High Street of Galata, along to Tophaneh. It is decidedly the busiest part of the Frankish side of the city, and is the spot where

the European captains most do congregate, as a fine prey for the rascally Greeks and Maltese, who lay watch to plunder them, or stab them remorselessly if they are so foolish as to resist. But Jack Tar is true to himself in every clime: he must pay a lengthened visit to the grog-shop, and drink his skinful of rakih; and, though almost certain of meeting death on the road, insists on returning to his ship at midnight. There are no lamps, owing to the opinion of the police that if the streets were lighted the thieves would notice them come up, and get out of the way; and, as a general rule, the Turks love darkness, for they are the sons of night.

In the daytime, however, Galata is tolerably safe, so long as you do not diverge from the main route, or are not tempted to enter the drinking-houses, where the Dalilahs are lying in wait to shear the English Samsons, and the streets certainly present a very picturesque aspect. Nothing is more convincing of the backwardness of the Turks as regards civilisation than the good understanding that exists among the tradesmen. You find a whole street of coffee-shops—then another of pipe-makers—a third stuffed with clothes-sellers—all patiently sitting at the receipt of custom, without evincing any desire to cut their rivals' throats. If you want any article you go up to a shop and begin chaffering; the other tradesmen merely mutter "In-shallah" or "Baccalum," and set to work at their rosaries and pipes with the most perfect indifference as to pushing their trade.

Charles plodded his way through the pools of mud and garbage till his guide reached the market-place of Top-haneh, and then progress seemed impossible. The noise was deafening as the Turks cheapened vegetables, and walked off with a grin of exultation, bearing a huge pumpkin or vegetable marrow, the staple of their frugal meal. But it was remarkable what good temper they all displayed, and although you might imagine, at the first glance, that they must come to blows immediately, for there appeared no other outlet for their passion, the Turks were perfectly harmless, and, so soon as business was satisfactorily arranged, drowned all animosity in a glass of iced water or a mouthful of *halwas*, at which they took fraternal bites in turn. At last Charles succeeded in emerging from the mob, laughing heartily at the flowery expressions which had been hurled at his head, and fortunately not understanding them. In truth, how can you be angry with a

Turk, even if he express a wish that a little dog may defile your father or mother's grave, when he utters the imprecation with such an exquisitely smiling face, and probably fancies that he is paying you a high compliment by noticing an infidel at all?

It was a heart-breaking pull up Tophaneh Hill, and Charles looked with an envious eye on the white umbrellas that passed him, or tried to peer through the gauze veils which hid the women's features from his inspection. But they seemed not at all alarmed at the handsome young Frank, and I daresay would have gladly listened to his compliments, had they dared to stop. But every Turk regards himself in the light of a moral policeman as far as women are concerned, and if he saw a female daring to exchange glances with a Giaour would immediately give her a good thrashing ; so the women are forced to be virtuous, and shuffle along in their clumsy yellow boots without daring to cast a longing, lingering look behind.

At last Misseri's Hotel was reached, and Charles had the distinguished honour of becoming the guest of Mr. Kinglake's interpreter at a price which would make even the Clarendon blush. Without exception this is the worst hotel in the world. There is an affectation of English habits, and even bells are put up, which you have the privilege of ringing all day, if you like, for exercise, but no one ever thinks proper to answer. If you by accident catch a waiter in the passage he will reply, "Subito, Signor," and carefully avoids the vicinity of your room for the rest of the day. But I think I can give my readers the best notion of a Perote hotel by stating that when Mr. Horsely Robinson, the commissioner of the Euphrates Valley line was dying at Misseri's, his wife could not even get a cup of beef tea made for him, or the slightest assistance in her arduous watching. It must be remembered that this took place after the war, and when Misseri must have made thousands of pounds by the British officers, and, as his wife is an Englishwoman, there was no excuse for such brutality. Misseri would not break through the rules he had laid down ; he would *not* give them a private room ; they must live at the table d'hôte. Although any amount of money was offered for the accommodation it was refused, and Mr. Robinson, though suffering severely from bronchitis, was compelled to be removed to the Hôtel Bellevue, where he died.

Young men, however, pay but slight attention to these

trifles, so Charles indulged in a bottle of bitter beer (for which he was charged, by the way, three and sixpence in his bill), and then made himself presentable to proceed to the embassy. Everybody being down at Therapia, where Sir Stratford was growling over an exaggerated fit of gout, and making himself worse by thinking that matters were going wrong at court through his inability to attend to business, Charles handed over his despatch-bag to a magnificent creature in crimson cloth coat and continuations, and became a gentleman at large, at full liberty to enjoy all the gratification which Stamboul could offer a stranger.

Somehow he found it rather dull in Pera, and, after eating some dozen ices at Droyschmann's, it was impossible to have recourse to that expedient any longer. Besides, he was troubled by thoughts as to how he should set to work in his search for the Count, as, having no one to assist him, it would prove a difficult matter to detect him in the filthy purlieus of Galata, where criminals always congregate. Chance, however, threw a valuable assistant in his way in a very simple manner, and in the shape of a Hanoverian gentleman, whom he had known slightly during the existence of the *Tricolor*. Although he had mounted the fez, and looked to all intents and purposes a Turk, his stomach had remained very Christian, and he regularly dined at Misseri's. He had an appointment as colonel in the Polytechnic School, and drew a fine income for doing nothing, as is generally the case with renegades. In fact they can do no otherwise: if they set to work honestly the Turks regard them with suspicion, and fancy they are trying to cheat; so for the sake of peace and quietness they generally degenerate into fainéants, and thus gain the esteem of the government.

Charles was delighted at seeing a familiar face, and soon told Colonel Hippmann what object he had in coming to Constantinople. The Colonel listened attentively, and said it would be a very difficult matter to track a convict in Stamboul; at any rate, they would be obliged to take the matter in their own hands; they could expect no assistance from the khavasses, who did not care to interfere in matters between Europeans.

"Even if we catch this fellow," said the Colonel, "I fear we can do nothing with him but offer a compromise. There is no power here which can force him into giving up the papers you require, and, though he may have murdered

twenty people, so long as he has money no one will think him the worse here. We shall have to act with caution; but the first thing is to find him. If you like I will lend you a revolver, and we will begin our search this night through Galata. But first we can visit the *Jardin des Fleurs*; it is possible he may go there, and you can point him out to me. When I once know him I will put some fellows on his track, and if we can find out that he has been engaged in any villany here we may trap him."

The *Jardin des Fleurs* is probably called so on the lucus à non principle. It is a dusty, sandy yard, with benches round it, and the only flowers visible are those in the bonnets of the Perote fashionable world. A wretched band plays in a kiosk in the centre of the garden, and the company walk slowly round like a mill horse pursuing its dull trade. But this is thought an exquisite amusement, and when the dust gets too oppressive it is washed down with weak grog, which ladies drink unblushingly.

"Ah, you have not seen him, I fancy?" said the Colonel. "Well, then, come with me; the Sultan visits the mosque at Tophaneh to-night, and a great crowd will assemble. Possibly he may be there."

And, stepping into a little shop, the Colonel bought two paper lamps with farthing rushlights stuck in them, which, strange to say, are a better protection in this city of contradictions than a coat of mail would prove. Your thief shuns the light instinctively, and cowers into his lurking place till the treacherous glimmer has passed. Down that terrible hill they blundered, the Colonel's sabre rattling over the stones and giving a solemn warning, and they soon reached the great gates of the mosque, where a countless crowd was assembled, patiently enduring the fierce blows of the khavasses, in the hope of their pain being deadened by a back view of the mighty Padishah as he walked from the mosque to his kaik.

The Colonel's uniform procured them admission into the square of the mosque, and Charles was lost in admiration at the exquisite taste displayed in the illuminations. On all sides were planted trees, with coloured lamps suspended from them, formed of paper, and representing flowers: here and there a tank of water might be noticed with water-lilies floating upon it. The mosque itself was covered with lamps up to the summit of the graceful minarets, and the *tout ensemble* (to quote penny-a-linerdom) was superb in the extreme. A double guard of honour was drawn up,

the troops positively looking clean for once, and wearing handsome embroidered uniforms, while at the spot where the Sultan's foot would first touch the soil a splendid triumphal arch was erected. It was composed of very simple materials, being merely tin; but the clever way in which it was arranged to reflect the innumerable lights rendered it more effective than the most costly efforts of our artificers. Suddenly the illuminated vessels in the Golden Horn belched forth a sea of flame, the thundering echoes pealed round the seven hills, and the Sultan landed.

During the interval Charles and the Colonel walked about the grounds searching in vain for the *soi-disant* Count. Many patibulary physiognomies passed them, but not that particular one which they desired to see, and at length a hoarse murmur of expectation announced that the Padishah had quitted the mosque. Charles hurried up to get a view of the mighty monarch, and very irreverently broke through the line of troops; and he did see a Jewish-looking personage in a fez and long black cloak, walking with downcast eyes in the centre of a mob of burly gold-laced pachas. He started with surprise: that little insignificant man could not be the descendant of the mighty sultans who had carried war and desolation to the gates of Vienna, and kept the whole of Europe in a state of nervous excitement and terror. He seemed a mere child, cowed and broken-spirited, and the timid, hurried manner in which he allowed the beads of his jewelled rosary to slip through his fingers evinced his knowledge of his powerlessness. The poor victim of material enjoyments glided along like a ghost to his gaily-decorated barge; he would return to his palace at Dolma Bagtché to try all the seductions which a sensualist fancy could prepare for him, and dream, mayhap, that his nerveless arm was endued with a giant's strength to repulse the encroachments of the hateful Moskov Giaour.

So soon as the Sultan had departed, a magnificent display of fireworks was let off to satisfy the cravings of the mob. They were certainly superb, and Charles was lost in wonder as to the means a notoriously poor government could have at its command for such a ruinous outlay. Hundreds of shells were fired into the air at once, bursting with a fearful crash, enough to rend any unaccustomed tympanum; but the Turks regarded it all as a matter of course, and not even an "ah" of admiration proved them roused from their wonted apathy. The ungrateful fellows

regarded with perfect indifference the preparations made for their amusement, and though the coffee-houses would have been filled with seditious cries, had the Baïram festival not been kept up, they had not a word of recognition to bestow in return.

The last shower of shells produced a blaze of light rivalling the brightest sunshine, and Charles, involuntarily lowering his head before the threatened explosion, saw the face he had been in search of in close proximity to his elbow. The sudden start he gave warned the Count of the presence of an enemy, and he dived under the arm of a soldier, and cleft his way through the mass. Charles was at his heels in a moment, but found it impossible to come up with him before he reached the great gates. The surging of the crowd alone indicated the fugitive's passage, and Charles elbowed his way furiously along, thrusting the passive Turks roughly on one side, until he reached the very densest part of the crowd, and the main stream of carriages which blocked up the way.

Pursuit was hopeless: it was almost impossible for Charles to insure his own safety, so recklessly did the mounted khavasses dash through the crowds to make room for the fat pachas who sat in the gaily-painted arabas. Worn out with the struggle, he at length retired into a corner, where he consumed the entire stock of an ambulating lemonade-seller. How heartily he cursed the Turks who had thus come between him and his enemy, my readers may imagine: there was no chance now of coming up with him, and the only consolation was that the Count was still living in Constantinople. If human power would avail, Charles swore a bitter oath that he would track him to his lair.

But he was a prisoner himself: the mob flowed onwards from the Tophanech Square for hours, and there was no prospect of escape. At length, however, it gradually grew thinner, and Charles made his way into a side street, by which he hoped to reach the Hôtel d'Angleterre and the more civilised haunts of man. Many were the contests he had to wage with masterless dogs, which evinced an insane desire for a mouthful of trouser and boot, and the stout stick he carried served him in good stead. He wandered on, bringing up continually against doorways and arabas, or almost breaking his neck in deep holes, and, of course, lost his way. At length he reached a respectable-looking street, which he fancied he recognised, and soon found himself standing on the Piccolo Santo.

The view, bathed in the exquisite moonlight, of the Bosphorus and Golden Horn was magnificent; and, had it not been for a dead dog lying in the centre of the roadway, and emitting most unsavoury stenches, Charles could have gazed for ever. His candle had burned out long before, but for that he did not care: he was in close proximity to his home, and the lights burning in the windows of the Hôtel de France insured him a welcome safety. He therefore strolled carelessly onwards, and entered the narrow street which runs directly to the Hôtel d'Angleterre from the little field of the dead. Suddenly a man rushed upon him with uplifted knife, and he had only just time to raise his stick, and deal him a crushing blow across the face. The ruffian, however, was so infuriated that he seemed not to care for this assault—he rushed upon Charles, and tried to bear him to the ground. The struggle was tremendous, and the silence was only broken by the hot, hissing breath of the assassin. But Charles was not easily to be conquered, and had almost mastered his assailant when footsteps were heard. A party of khavasses came round the corner with hand-lamps; the ruffian freed himself by a violent wrench, and fled round the corner, Charles recognising in the flickering rays the man he had so long been in search of.

Charles started in pursuit, but was again soon distanced. The Count ran past the Mevlevié and dashed down a side street, where he disappeared, and I have no doubt soon gained his fellow-ruffians in Galata. Slight reflection proved to Charles the folly of pursuit, and the hostility the Count evinced for him thwarted his plans: the prospect of recovering the all-important papers seemed more hopeless than ever. He therefore returned to Misseri's, where he found the Colonel awaiting him. Hungry as he was he would have gladly ordered some supper; but the clock had struck eleven, and the despot Misseri had locked up the larder, so he was forced to retire to bed *impransus*, as Dr. Johnson once subscribed himself.

The Colonel agreed with Charles that there was but little chance of recovering the documents, for the ruffian was evidently on his guard, and if he suspected danger would probably burn them, and thus destroy all evidence against him. However, the Colonel entered into negotiations with some useful scoundrels, who promised to try and recover the papers, for which a large reward was offered. He left them perfect liberty to kill the Count in trying to recover

them, if other means failed ; for, as he philosophically remarked, " it will only save the hangman a job sooner or later."

In the meanwhile he did his best to amuse Charles by taking him to the few sights which Constantinople has to offer the stranger. On a couple of the Colonel's horses they rode over the New Bridge and visited the Great Bazaar, where Charles spent heaps of money in buying presents for Helen, which he could have procured in Paris or London for one-half the price. But the curious scenes the Bazaar presents are worthy of a little overcharge, and the Turkish character can nowhere be studied to such perfection. When I was last in Stamboul I spent days there with a malignant and turbaned Turk, trying to come to terms about a Khorassan blade, and the old rogue must have spent a little fortune in coffee and Latakiah tobacco ; but the bargain came to nothing. He could not be induced to lower his price ; on the contrary, he seemed to raise it with each day's delay, and though we bargained as bitterly as if we were ready to cut each other's throats, we remained perfectly good friends when the bargain was broken off. The merchant made me a present of a fez, which I requited by giving him a pound of cavendish tobacco, and the worthy old gentleman shed tears when I announced to him my departure for Inghilterra.

Nor did my hero neglect a visit to the sweet waters of Europe, you may be sure, for there is no better opportunity for having a sly peep at the " pets of the harem ;" but the trouble is thrown away. There is nothing worth seeing in a very stout sallow woman, whose face is only redeemed from positive ugliness by her magnificent eyes. Besides, I would defy you to pump up a sentiment for a bundle of amber satin, perfectly shapeless, and as clumsy as a domino at a masked ball ; and, though the ladies are not at all indisposed to display their charms, you need not go out of your way to regard them.

I remember being awfully sold in the Rue de la Poste by three laughing gipsies of Turkish women, who snared me into following them by casting Parthian glances at me. At the corner near the Austrian embassy one of them dropped her veil as if by accident, and I saw the most magnificent shiny negro girl I ever met ; but, before I could speak to them, they shambled away, and three heavy khavasses with white sticks prevented any tentatives on my

part to follow them. The scowling policemen hissed a "Jawur" at me, to which I responded with a smiling "Pezevenk," and they went on their way, fairly beaten at finding an infidel so well up to their slang.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"VENGEANCE IS MINE, SAITH THE LORD."

WEEKS slipped away unprofitably. No trace of the Count could be found, and Charles was prepared to give up the chase in despair, moved to this opinion in a great measure by the awful proportions of Misseri's little bill. However, the Colonel very kindly offered him a share of his apartments, and, being thus enabled to reduce his expenses, Charles took a peep at Turkish private life. It was not unpleasant by any means. Hippmann had some splendid airy rooms looking over the Bosphorus, which could only be reached through a very cut-throat court, and Charles was much pleased with the society he met there. After the first plunge, as in the sea, and conquering his repugnance to the idea of renegades, Charles learned a great deal from them on the subject of the boasted Turkish reform. They were unanimous in regarding it as a *caput mortuum*, by means of which the Turkish Divan tried to delude the outer barbarians; but there was no sincerity in their promises. Looking on themselves as merely encamped in Europe, and stolidly awaiting the day when the white-haired barbarian would drive them back to their happy hunting grounds in Asia Minor, it was not likely that the Turks would put themselves out of their way to grant any concession to infidels, which they knew would only be regarded as occasioned by fear. The plainest proof of this feeling will be found in the fact that the richer Turks are all buried in the cemetery at Scutari, lest their bones might be eventually trodden under the heel of the Giaour.

The renegades who have received appointments in the Turkish service are generally honest men, and set out on their duties with an ardent desire to earn their money honestly. I do not think I would put any faith in the conversion of a Catholic, nor would I admire any Englishmen

who followed their example. But the renegades who are now serving as Beys in the Turkish army and offices were in a very peculiar position ; they were starving and hopeless of returning home, whence they had been driven by the victory of the troops, and, as for religion, those of my readers acquainted with Germany will agree with me that the least said upon that matter the better. But I do not believe that the change has been produced by any devotional feeling, for men that have proved false to the faith of their fathers cannot believe in Mahommedism, which requires a most sincere and blind belief. I have even my doubts about old Bem, although the Turks did make a saint of him, naturally assuming that the conversion of so old a man must have been occasioned by faith in the vitality of the new religion he took up.

But apart from the religious aspect, as I said before, the German renegades in the Turkish service are honest men, and have striven to do their duty honestly. I had occasion to meet several of them at Stamboul in the rooms of Colonel Waagman, formerly chief interpreter to Lord Raglan, and they were unanimous in their disgust at their treatment. If the Turks are distinguished for one quality more than another it is for ingratitude. See how they treated Iskender Bey (Count Illinski), who gained the battle of Citate for them, and took four Russian guns at Oltenitza. They thought they had amply rewarded him by appointing him to a lieutenant-colonelcy, while the cowardly pachas, who ran away as fast as their corpulence would permit, were made generals. I hardly know one instance of a renegade who has gained by the step. Even Omar Pasha, once the admiration of Europe, is now forgotten; but perhaps he deserves it for his neglect of the Turkish army at Kars. Among the renegades I have met few have got beyond a colonelcy, and they have had to endure dire contumely and insult before they attained that rank. In action they are always exposed to the enemy's fire, and bear the brunt of the engagement ; but they need anticipate no reward for their folly. If they gain the respect of their troops by their spirited conduct, they fall into disgrace and are shelved ; and thus, heart-weary with the struggle against Turkish sloth and selfishness, they have ended by subsiding into thorough drudges, while chafing inwardly at the compulsion which forced them into idleness.

But, even if they were allowed to carry their reforms into effect without government opposition, they could not make

head against the resistance offered by the Turkish regimental officers. The lieutenants and captains are honest, well-meaning men; but all the general officers are not worth their salt. They spend their time in extorting bucksheesh from the privates, and cooking the roster by keeping dead men on to draw their pay. They are, of course, ignorant; but they are arrogant at the same time, and their thick-headed obstinacy is the curse of the Turkish army. These were the men who thwarted the efforts of the European officers in the Turkish contingent, and tried to sow ill-feeling among the troops. Fortunately their little plans were defeated, and the contingent was in a fair way of repaying the outlay made upon it when the force was disbanded, and the English officers rewarded for their exertions by two months' gratuity, and leave to get home from Constantinople in any way they thought proper. As an officer of that force I know I ought in duty bound to abuse Lord Stratford for preventing us having the Medjidié, which the Sultan was willing to give us; but, regarding the manifold services that amiable old gentleman has done his country, I cannot find it in my heart to attack him. *Errare humum est* is very applicable to our envoy at Stamboul.

Charles was seated with his friend one evening, arguing about the regeneration of Turkey—that favourite topic with all persons who know nothing of the Turks—when Agob, the joint-servant, thrust a very dirty note into Hippmann's hand. He hurriedly perused it, and then, turning to Charles, said,—

“My son, the person to whom I intrusted the affair with the Count writes to say that he wishes to see you to-night at M. Jefferini's in Galata; he has important news to communicate. I would advise you to go. I would accompany you, but that I must be at the seraglio to-morrow morning at four o'clock to kiss hands, and a long night's rest is very necessary. Agob, a horse for the Effendi!” he shouted, clapping his hands, and within a few minutes Charles was on his road to Galata. He found the house indicated with some difficulty, and, sending the horse back to Pera by the sais, walked into a filthy den, where the guests sat on casks, to meet the writer of the letter. It proved, as he had anticipated, only a pretext to get more money out of him, and he angrily quitted the den, almost vowing that he would give up a search which brought him into contact with such villainous accomplices.

He was making his way toward Pera when the signal of

seven guns was heard booming from the seraglio point, and the loud shouts of “*Yangin Var!*” proved that Tophaneh was suffering from the usual scourge. Out of curiosity Charles followed the firemen as they trotted up, some carrying large leather squirts, while others were armed with long iron-shod poles to pull down the burning beams, which assisted the progress of the fire. When he reached the scene of danger the fire was spreading with fearful rapidity; some thirty houses were already levelled with the ground, and there appeared no chance of saving any portion of the quarter.

But Charley's attention was attracted to a tall latticed window, whence shrieks could be heard issuing, the Turks looking on coolly the while, and saying, “It is the will of God.” At length Charles distinguished through the smoke a young man in a sailor's garb, leaning out of the upper part of the window, and imploring help. Charles snatched an axe from a bystander, and, bidding the Turks raise one of their clumsy ladders, he bounded up it, and soon drove in the latticework with his vigorous blows. He then leaped into the room, picked up the inmate, who was lying senseless from smoke and terror at the foot of the window, and bore him quickly down the ladder, without receiving any damage worse than the singeing of a favourite whisker.

The crowd, for a wonder, seemed greatly excited by this simple act of bravery, for, though constitutionally so brave, not a Turk there would have tried to counteract the inevitable decree of fate by stretching out a finger; and water was brought, by Charles's direction, to sprinkle in the young man's face. He opened his eyes wildly, and, as they fell on Charles, he gave a loud shriek and fainted. In tearing open his jacket Charles found to his surprise that it was a woman, and an indistinct notion that the face was familiar to him grew momentarily stronger.

The stranger opened her eyes again after a pause and muttered, “Surely this must be the hand of God. Mr. Dashwood, you remember me, Julie Monthemar?”

Charles was very much excited, as you may suppose, and something seemed to tell him instinctively that this meeting would have a great result. He was not mistaken; for Julie, as soon as she had recovered, begged him to remove her to Pera. She had much to tell him, and it would be better for them to be out of hearing. Charles removed her to his lodgings, much to the surprise of Colonel Hippmann, and anxiously awaited her story. Julie was beaming with

triumph; for she had succeeded, she expected, in avenging herself on the Count, and it added to her satisfaction that he had fallen almost into the selfsame trap as he had laid for her.

"Oh, Mr. Dashwood!" she said passionately, "you do not know the Corsican girls, I can see. I had sworn to be revenged on the villain Jacques, and I have been successful. Although he thought himself so clever, he was a child when he yielded to my wiles. I made him believe that I still dearly loved him, and had followed him for that reason. He fell into the snare with his eyes open, and I gradually regained his entire confidence. Last week he had formed a plan with several of his accomplices to break into Stampa's store. I seized all his papers and money so soon as his back was turned, and denounced him to the police. He will be hanged, I believe. Did you ever see a man hanged, Mr. Dashwood? They tell me he does not die directly, but has time to think of the past. Julie will be present, and, just as he is dying, will show him her cheek, which bears the mark of his blow still. You will go too, Mr. Dashwood, to see the murderer of Madame Leblanc pay the penalty of his numerous crimes?"

And Julie worked herself up into a state of dangerous insanity, and clutched at her knife with an ominous glare, which evidenced that Jacques would have but a poor chance of escape, even if he succeeded in getting out of the hands of the Turkish police. But her fury was redoubled when the Colonel said coolly,—

"I am afraid, my poor girl, that you have deceived yourself; your villainous Count will be handed over to his own consul, and stands but little chance of hanging. He will probably be imprisoned for a short time at Prinkipo, and then let loose again to prey upon society."

"I will make sure of that. If he do not meet with the proper punishment I will take it on myself: he shall not escape, be assured," said Julie frantically. "But I must guard against his accomplices; they fired the house this night in the hope of recovering Jacques' papers and money during the confusion; but they will be foiled—ha, ha! But stay, Mr. Dashwood; they may succeed in killing me, though I am certain God will spare me till I have enjoyed my righteous revenge. I have handed the papers to the Abbé Lacoste, and he will only deliver them up on a written authority from myself. I will give it you, and I hope you will tell Miss Helen that Julie's last prayer was

for her happiness. Here is the requisite document. Good night!"

"Stay, Julie, you must not expose yourself to danger. Jacques' accomplices will strive to get you out of the way, you may be sure—then why not trust to my protection?"

"I thank you, Mr. Dashwood, but I am quite fearless; I feel confident that Jacques will not escape, but I must take every precaution to prevent it. I shall watch the prison closely in which he is confined, and if I find your opinion confirmed my knife will avenge me; so do not try to stop me—I have a mission to perform, and feel certain I shall not fail."

And she glided from the room like a ghost, leaving Charles all in amazement, but yet heartily pleased at the thought that he was now in a fair way of accomplishing the object of his stay in Constantinople. He proceeded the next day to the Abbé Lacoste, and recovered the all-important documents, which were securely fastened up and addressed to Miss Mowbray, and, though burning with a desire to solve the mystery, he would not break the seal. Nothing now detained him longer in Stamboul; but, packing up his traps, and drawing some money from the embassy for his expenses, he prepared to start for Gürkenhof. This time, however, he was heartily resolved not to undergo the *peine forte et dure* of a journey up the Danube, and determined on returning *via* Trieste.

But Colonel Hippmann was quite correct in his appreciation of the mixed tribunals. The French consul had a fine opportunity for intriguing, and made such a pother about his naughty countryman that the Turkish authorities were glad to give in. Jacques was condemned to a few weeks' incarceration at Prinkipo, and would then be set at liberty, with strict injunctions not to return to Constantinople, lest a worse thing might befall him. It would be impossible to describe the fury Julie felt on hearing that her prey was thus escaping from her; and she prowled round the prison, regardless of personal danger, fearing lest Jacques might be removed when she was not present to avenge herself.

At length the day arrived on which Jacques was to be removed from the prison to the steamer. As soon as he made his appearance under a strong guard of Turkish soldiers, Julie flew at him like a tigress, and would have driven the dagger into his heart, but the craven shrank back at the sight of the outraged woman, whose dupe he

had suffered himself to become, and she was dragged off by some khavasses. The disappointment turned her excitable brain, and the idea that her revenge was torn from her at the moment when it was in her grasp made her perfectly mad. It was a pitiable sight to see her struggling maniacally with the soldiers, who treated her so kindly, through their innate respect for all insane persons. Jacques, however, burst into a coarse laugh, and, I doubt not, felt very much easier in mind when he found that Julie was thus rendered harmless to injure him.

He walked down Pera Hill humming a French drinking song gaily, and, though the morning was gloomy and threatening, he little heeded it. It seemed as if nature herself was revolted by this mockery of justice. At length the procession reached the new bridge where the steamers start for the Princes' Islands, and Jacques turned defiantly back to clench his fist at Pera, and vow a bitter revenge on those who had driven him so ignominiously from its walls. His eye fell on Charles as he stood watching the embarkation, and he turned livid at the remembrance which his presence conjured up; but he soon regained his bravado, and shouted,—

“Ah, you white-livered dog! you think you are triumphant now, but my turn will come again. You shall not enjoy the company of your fair-haired English girl for long. I will step in to prevent your happiness. I will revenge myself upon you, even if all the demons in hell strive to stop me.”

He had scarcely uttered this blasphemous threat ere a vivid flash of lightning burst from the black cloud above his head, followed by a deafening peal of thunder, before the awful majesty of which every one involuntarily bowed his head. When they recovered from their terror Jacques was noticed to be lying on the ground. The soldiers tried to raise him, fancying that the flash had terrified him; but it was in vain—he was quite dead. The divine vengeance had fallen with awful effect upon him. It had seared the tongue with which he had dared to utter such a grim defiance, and the Turks lifted him from the ground, piously ejaculating, “It is the will of God!”

What became of Julie was never accurately known. She lay in a state of delirium for months, tended with unwearied patience and kindness by the Abbé. At length she suddenly disappeared from the world, and it was believed that she had become a sister of charity. But I

know that this was the case, and I may add that she was killed by a round shot at the siege of Sebastopol, where she continually exposed herself to danger in assisting wounded soldiers in the trenches. May a life of sincere penitence and chastisement have averted from her the awful consequences of her great and manifold sins! The soldiers swore by Sister Julie as an angel, and many a tear fell upon her grave from eyes which would have laughed at a notion of shedding a tear; and even old Leroux, the father of the Zouaves, who allowed his leg to be cut off without a murmur, and only cursed when the surgeon asked him if he hurt him, was observed to be extremely thoughtful when the news of Julie's death was broken to him, and borrowed a good book to read, from which, only the week before, he had irreligiously torn out a leaf for conversion into cigarettes.

The sight of Jacques' awful death sickened Charles of Constantinople. Do what he could that awful grinning face rose before him constantly, and he took a hearty leave of Colonel Hippmann, giving him and his renegade friends as good a dinner as Droyschmann could put before them. Many a bottle of Cyprus was drunk to the health of the host, and I regret to say some very revolutionary toasts were proposed. But, poor fellows, they could not be blamed; for only a sanguinary subversion of the existing relations in Europe would enable them to return home, and give up the miserable existence they were undergoing in Cassim Pacha Barracks.

I have written more favourably of these renegades than perhaps my readers may think justifiable; but I speak in some measure from personal knowledge, and had very favourable opportunities of appreciating their excellent qualities during the past war. They behaved with remarkable bravery on behalf of a most thankless cause, and in no instance, I believe, was their integrity called in question; and they are now leading a truly wretched life, for the Turkish government vents its spite at the forced contact with infidels upon them. It is a great fallacy to suppose that the Turks feel one particle of gratitude to the French and English allies for their interference. I can say from personal knowledge that nine-tenths of the Mussulmans believed that we were compelled to send our armies to Sebastopol as vassals of the mighty Padishah, and that his only reason for allowing us to take part in the combat was to save the lives of the faithful. And if my readers are indisposed to credit this, let them ask any officer conversant

with the Turks as to his opinion about them, and if he do not agree in every particle with myself, and allow that they are a set of unmitigated ruffians and ungrateful scoundrels, whom it will be a standing disgrace for England to claim as allies, why, I am willing to cancel every word I have written, and pin my faith on M. Ubicini's statements about them.

CHAPTER XL.

LE NEVEU DE SON ONCLE.

HELEN soon wearied of the amusements Paris afforded. and though the Princess tried hard to assert her dignity, there is always something about the position of a lady separated from her husband which leads to unpleasant remarks. At length the Princess appeared inclined to cast off all reserve, and after an application to her husband that matters should be re-arranged between them, so that the *convenances* might be restored on a satisfactory footing, she threw down the glove on his refusal, and became one of the most fervent partisans of the Prince President, her salons being the gathering place of all those persons who trusted in the Napoleonic star, and believed that the tranquillity of Europe depended on the success of that wonderful man.

This, as may be supposed, rendered the breach irreconcilable between husband and wife. Prince Rubelskoff, as blood-relation of the Czar, could not endure the notion that a person allied to his house should so overtly espouse the cause of a parvenu, as it was the fashion to call Louis Napoleon at the Russian court, and who was hated so fervently because there was very just ground to fear him in the event of his asserting his supremacy. The Prince consulted his notary to try and stop his wife's allowance, or hold that threat over her *in terrorem*; but he was completely foiled. Nothing could be done in that quarter, and if the Princess liked to hand over the whole of her fortune to the Prince President she was at perfect liberty to do so.

There was something very fascinating to Helen in this playing at politics, and she was delighted at the company who assembled in the Princess's salons. The great names

of Algeria buzzed constantly in her ear, and even the Prince President himself made his august appearance now and then, and completely won Helen's heart by talking to her in English. His affability had a marvellous effect on the Princess, and she bitterly regretted that she was still tied so closely to her husband, for her vanity whispered to her that she could gain the President's heart. But in that she was mistaken; he was not at all the man to be led away from his great object by woman's blandishments. Business first and pleasure afterwards was his motto during the whole of his stormy debates with the turbulent and very windy constituent assembly. But the Princess enjoyed the compensation of having all the generals at her feet; for, as true Frenchmen, they could plot and make love at the same time, and, had the Princess been disposed to compromise herself, she would have had ample opportunities. But her ambition took a higher flight, and Helen's presence was a great safeguard to her. In constant intercourse with that pure minded girl, it was not possible for her to give way to thoughts of evil, which she knew would grieve Helen even more than herself.

On looking calmly at the game of chess which the Prince President played against the assembly, the stake being his own head, the most uncompromising opponent of Louis Napoleon must credit him with the perfect mastery of the game and true knowledge of the power of the pieces. The condition was most anomalous; the "Sword of France" was measuring his strength against the President, and, with the majority at his back, felt certain of success; but his defences were carried one after the other, and he was left at last perfectly exposed, and yet unable to complain of illegality, so naturally did the moves follow each other. The odium of acting against the law was thrown upon him, and he was in the toils of the hunter at the moment that he imagined himself the strongest. All his attempts to establish a pretorian guard and sell the empire to the highest bidder failed; and there is no doubt but that, had not the Prince President prevented him, he would have had recourse to some extreme measure, and thrown France into the most inextricable confusion.

Changarnier was indubitably a clever man. Recent revelations have taught us that he believed in the re-establishment of the empire from the first appearance of Louis Napoleon on the political arena, and had the means in his hands to carry it into effect; but he was flattered into the

insane idea that he could play the part of a parliamentary Monk, the while entertaining an *arrière pensée* that the fall of the dice might be favourable to himself. In all probability, had Dupin yielded to Changarnier's proposition of establishing a parliamentary army, France would have been exposed to all the horrors of a civil war; but Dupin, although very willing to overthrow the Prince President, was sufficiently a patriot to foresee the lamentable result to his country, and drew back in terror at the audacious designs of the "Sword of France."

During the whole of the summer Helen carefully watched the movements on either side, and her admiration for the President grew unbounded, for she recognised in his cautious yet energetic steps the only possible salvation for France. At length the necessity of a *coup d'état* was openly canvassed in the salon, and, though its execution depended on the will of the President, every one could see that it could not be averted for long. In the meanwhile the assembly was playing into the President's hands: it derided the expressed wish of the nation for a revision of the constitution, and amused itself by putting up impossible candidates for the presidential seat. Louis Napoleon foiled them utterly by the selection of a ministry entirely independent of the assembly, and thus forced it into showing its hand.

At length the crisis arrived; the assembly so far forgot itself as to menace General St. Arnaud with arrest in its own bosom. The will of the people was openly expressed, and the hydra-headed faction must be put down by force. In these critical circumstances General Magnan took that bold step which decided the destiny of France. He made known to the generals of the army of Paris the impending struggle, and sought their adhesion. It was a most daring step, and taken on his own exclusive responsibility; but he was not deceived in his officers. They willingly consented to take their part in averting danger, and swore to maintain secrecy, and they kept their oath so rigorously that, until Granier de Cassagnac revealed the affair very recently, no one knew how Napoleon had succeeded in his design, and been enabled to take those comprehensive measures which rendered any attempt at opposition futile.

What strange thoughts must have passed through Napoleon's mind when the moment for action arrived! The usual assembly had taken place at the Elysée, but not a sign of pre-occupation was visible on the President's brow.

He received his guests with his usual imperturbable calmness, and listened to their suggestions blandly, but with no intention to alter his foregone conclusions. That very day he had received Monsieur de Heckeren as envoy of Monsieur Falloux, who had charitably proposed a combination which would avert all danger, and lead to a general pacification. The President's reply was, that he was enchanted at the good news, and begged him to call again the next morning to discuss the affair. By that time the game was played out, and Monsieur de Heckeren was only too glad to be one of the numerous band who flocked in to congratulate the President on his success.

By eleven o'clock on the evening of the 1st of December the salons were closed, and the actors of the impending drama were closeted with the Prince. They were but four, for the President knew that success was only certain by confining the secret to the smallest possible number. They were men whom he had bound to himself by piling benefits upon them, and who would surely be true to him through gratitude, were it only in the shape of a lively sense of favours to come. They had nothing to lose, but everything to gain: a failure might cost them their heads, but they set very slight value upon those articles of personal use. To St. Arnaud was intrusted the duty of directing the troops and crushing any attempted opposition; Monsieur de Morny, after counter-signing the decree of the dissolution of the assembly, would undertake the initiative, and all the responsibility of the measures to insure tranquillity in France and the provinces; Monsieur de Maupas had to perform the arrests judged necessary; while Monsieur de Beville had the very difficult task of carrying to the printing office, and watching with Monsieur de Saint Georges, director of the establishment, the publication of the official documents. These gentlemen, with the Prince's secretary, M. Mocquard, received the final instructions from the Prince, and we all know how perfectly they carried them into effect.

As may be supposed, many of the prisoners were very indignant that their own plot had been so cleverly nipped in the bud; but M. Charles Lagrange summed up the affair pithily enough in a few words. General le Flô, quæstor of the dissolved assembly, was extremely violent; but M. Lagrange said, "Why are you so angry, General? We wished to shut up the President of the republic here, and he has shut us up instead. Well played, *ma foi!* I do not feel the least angry with him;" and I fancy that the old

opponent of the President must in his heart have confessed the same justification.

The rump parliament tried very hard to assert its dignity, but made a lamentable failure of it. The popular feeling was against them, and they speedily reverted to their nothingness. The majority of the prisoners were offered their liberty, but declined it, and gentle pressure was required to make them leave a prison which they had been so unwilling to enter. The moral resistance was overcome, and all that remained to do was to give the democrats one sharp but crushing blow, which would keep them quiet for a very long while. In this matter General Magnan displayed the ability of an experienced tactician. He allowed the revolution to come to a head before he proceeded to attack it, and the insurrectionists were enveloped in a network of bayonets, which they found it impossible to break through. Three hours' hard fighting settled the business, the total loss of the insurgents amounting to one hundred and seventy-five killed, and one hundred and fifteen wounded. I daresay my readers remember the stories which filled the English papers at the time about the massacre which took place at nightfall on the Champ de Mars, and in the forts surrounding Paris. I am sorry to be obliged to overthrow a fiction so pleasing to the enemies of Louis Napoleon, but there is not a word of truth in the story. The Emperor's conduct has been a sufficient guarantee that even at that period he knew how to temper justice with mercy.

Another story, believed with equal credulity at the period when Dr. Lardner was pouring out the vials of his wrath through the columns of the *Times* upon the Prince President, that twenty millions of francs were taken from the bank to reward the soldiers, is also unfounded. There is strong ground for the belief that Louis Napoleon entered on his perilous path with insolvency staring him in the face. Everything he possessed in the world prior to the coup d'état was a sum of fifty thousand francs, which he ordered Colonel Fleury to distribute to the troops, because he knew that on certain memorable occasions the soldiers had succumbed to hunger rather than to defeat.

I can hardly believe that any apology is now necessary for the conduct of the Prince President during the coup d'état, for the English nation has rescinded its former opinion, and recognised the absolute necessity of his acting precisely in the way he did. Still I am glad to have an opportunity of making known these facts, believing as I do

that all publicity should be given to every circumstance which will prove the steady, persistent course of the Emperor of the French, thus furnishing the best guarantee that no seduction will be strong enough to make him break that alliance which forms the most brilliant epoch in the history of the two nations. Waterloo has been amply avenged, and the generous English have shown their readiness to wipe out all remembrances of the past, and insert in their place the glorious present.

It may be imagined with what fury the Prince Rubelskof received the news of Louis Napoleon's success, for it rendered him still more powerless to insult his wife. She would have a staunch supporter in the President, as a reward for her past exertions in his cause, and could snap her fingers at all orders to visit Petersburg, and do penance for her past sins. In this state of things the crafty Tartar hit on a scheme only worthy his own debased nature. He hurried off to Gürkenhof, and terrified the Grand Duke by giving him a sad picture of his daughter's conduct, more than hinting that, in all probability, she would soon be affichée as the mistress of the President of a republic. What a disgrace to a crowned head! It is true that Pumpernickel owed its existence to the first Napoleon, who had carved out a place for it in the map of Europe. Still the Grand Duke thought his generosity would not require him to sacrifice his name.

Still it was a very delicate subject. The Grand Duke stood in considerable awe of his daughter, since she had asserted her independence in so prononcé a manner; and it would not do for him to blurt out the awkward story he had heard, as he felt very sure that any violent steps would only impel Bertha to do the very thing he wished to avoid. As usual, he consulted the Countess, on whom he was beginning to lean more than ever.

"You see, Rosa," he said, after a lengthened conference, "if it had only been a Bourbon it would not have mattered so much. The Czar must have looked over the matter in consideration of the influence he would thus have gained, and if the affair could only have been kept quiet it would not have mattered much. But a Napoleon! Ugh!" And the Grand Duke gave a shudder, and felt much inclined to sing with Mrs. Peachum:—

"My Bertha is a sad slut, nor minds what I have taught her,
I wonder any man alive would ever rear a daughter."

"I quite agree with you," the Countess replied thoughtfully; "the esclandre must be avoided. The only thing I can suggest is that you should write to Miss Mowbray, and urge upon her the necessity of Bertha coming home. Tell her that you are ill, and wish to see your daughter, or anything of that sort, and the Princess will fall into the snare at once."

Much relieved by this suggestion, the Grand Duke proceeded to put it into execution; while the Countess, who had no wish to share her imperium in imperio with a rival, consulted with Prince Rubelskoff as to the best scheme for getting the Princess off to Russia, where he could shut her up on one of his estates and punish her for past insults. The worthy couple hit on an infallible plan, as they thought, which the straightforwardness of the Princess foiled in the simplest manner.

On the receipt of the letter Helen soon induced her mistress to consent to visit Gürkenhof, as her father desired it, but suggested that she should insist on the retirement of Prince Rubelskoff from the court before she entered it. The Grand Duke gladly consented, and gave him notice to quit, which the Prince was forced to obey, and thus the Princess escaped all danger. He was a good father so far as royal papas go, and, next to himself, dearly loved his daughter. We have seen that his moral ideas were not peculiarly straitlaced, and it was only the fear of the Russian bugbear which caused him to interfere in the matter at all; but he was quite sufficiently acquainted with Prince Rubelskoff to feel that he was not the man to make his daughter happy, and thought, consequently, that the separation was the best possible thing for all parties. Hence the Countess was especially careful not to drop a word about her little plot, and was content to bide her time.

It cost the Princess rather a hard struggle to quit the delights of Paris and the ovation which was being paid her as one of the stanchest friends of the new dynasty; but she could not withstand the appeal her father had made. She immediately made her preparations for her journey, and was followed by an army of cavalieri, who made a perfect change in the simple habits of the court. She found the Grand Duke in his usual state of health, and began to suspect that some plot was on foot against her security; but the perfect calmness her father maintained during her cross-examinations satisfied her that he, at least, was no party to any scheme against her peace of mind.

The Countess, too, was agreeably disappointed. The Princess had seen the world since her last residence in Gürkenhof, and was now quite willing to meet her on terms of friendship, almost of intimacy. Some judiciously applied flattery quite converted the Countess to the opinion that her left-handed daughter-in-law was a much-injured woman, and that it was the duty of her friends to protect her from the brutality of her husband. In short, the Prince's artfully concocted scheme turned entirely against himself, and, instead of gaining his point, and forcing the Princess to Russia, he found himself, to his intense annoyance, regarded with suspicion at Gürkenhof, and his intrigues utterly defeated. I may as well add here that he never regained his power over the Princess Bertha: they remained separate in life, as they had been in habits and education. In the last war the Princess was relieved from her odious fetters: the Prince was present at the siege of Silistria, much against his will, and, in trying to beat an ignominious retreat, he tumbled over a gun-carriage, and right into the way of a ricochetting cannon-ball, which carried off his head. The Princess vows she will never marry again, but I have my doubts. At any rate, she seems to prove the truth of the saying, that "on revient toujours à ses premiers amours," for the Count von Eckstein is her first chamberlain and her constant companion. This affords much scope for scandal, but crowned heads are raised far above such trivial considerations. She lives principally at Gürkenhof, and is adored by the people, owing to her unbounded charity, and altogether has had a very fortunate escape from the quicksands of matrimony. The news that the Emperor of the French was about to marry affected her unpleasantly, and she was out of spirits for a short period; but she soon recovered, and I daresay will smother all her dreams of ambition by becoming a good wife and fond mother before long.

But I am sadly running from my text. The return of Helen to Gürkenhof just at the period when Charles arrived in that city was so opportune, that, had I been writing a work of fiction, I have no doubt my readers would call it a clumsy contrivance. But such is the advantage of adhering to facts; and the adventures of Mr. Charles Dashwood are only a further confirmation that "truth is at times stranger than fiction." All left me now to do is to withdraw the veil which has hung over my heroine through the story, though I daresay my readers have lifted the curtain and taken a sly peep for themselves. But I generally find,

when I try to keep a secret, that it becomes the most transparent, and I have no doubt you are all prepared for the revelation it is my duty to make in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XLI.

WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN?

My friend Mr. Whitty, in his most amusing but slightly improper book, "Friends of Bohemia," takes opportunity to have a sly rap at novelists. He says that "in the plot of three-volume novels everything is revealed in the last chapter—the 'Who killed Cock Robin?' I, said the Sparrow,'" form of fiction requiring these unities. I confess that I agree with Mr. Whitty, as I do in most things which that very talented gentleman puts forth; but I am sorry to say I am constitutionally nervous, and dare not quit the beaten track. Besides, I fancy that surprise is the chief element of success in a novel. What interest could I have attempted to raise in my characters had I told you at starting who Helen Mowbray's father was? There is something flattering to the reader in giving him a nut to crack during the progress of the story, and it causes him or her a glow of inward satisfaction to reach the denouement, and be able to say to himself, "I thought that was it." Hence I am afraid that Mr. Whitty's subversive theories will meet no recognition from the constituted authorities, and his attacks on the present system of novel writing will fail in their effect. The only plan that appears to me feasible is to effect a compromise, and do the Cock Robin business in the antepenultimate chapter.

Charles had been waiting impatiently for Helen's return, and you can believe counted the hours during which he was forced to remain in suspense. She had, therefore, hardly descended at the palace ere he sent her a hurried note announcing his success, and accompanied by the all-important documents, which he hoped would insure their mutual felicity. Nor was Helen inclined to defer hope any longer; she burned to read the papers, and, so soon as she could retire with decency, shut herself up in her room, and with beating pulse broke the seals which still veiled the past and the future from her knowledge.

A sickly feeling overpowered her when she held the documents in her hand, and it was some minutes before she dared to unfold them. A much-worn paper irresistibly attracted her attention, and the first glance took her breath away. It was the marriage certificate of Amyas Dashwood, Esquire, and Ida Trevanion.

How the blood coursed through her veins on making this discovery! Her heart had not deceived her, then—the kind interest Sir Amyas had lately displayed in her welfare emanated from something more than friendship; and yet why had not the strange old man revealed this secret to her? He must have known that she was wretched through her ignorance of her parentage, and yet did not utter the word which would restore her to happiness. She sought further confirmation at once in the papers so strangely recovered, and soon understood the sad tale. But while she is perusing them with tearful eyes I had better throw the story into a narrative, and solve the few mysteries still remaining.

Amyas and Charles Dashwood had been rivals from their youth up. The younger chafed at the notion that during his brother's life there would be no chance of his succeeding to the title, and determined to rival him in every possible way. This was easy enough. Sir Amyas was weak and slow to learn, Charles just the reverse. Amyas was defeated in the schoolroom and in the playground, and his more daring brother was the idol of all his playmates. There was always something retiring in Amyas, which his schoolfellows ascribed to pride, but which in reality originated in nervousness, and he was bitterly grieved by the superiority which his younger brother maintained over him.

At length, during the holidays, matters came to a climax, and Amyas, maddened with passion, struck his younger brother, with the certainty of being most heartily thrashed for his impudence. To the Dashwoods a blow was instinctively a horror, and Charles, infuriated with passion, seized a bat and struck his brother violently across the leg. Amyas fell, and could not rise without assistance, for his ankle was broken; and the clumsy practitioner who was called in only reduced the dislocation by rendering his patient a cripple for life.

Charles was truly repentant for the injury his headstrong temper had impelled him to commit to his brother, and earnestly sought forgiveness. Not a word of murmuring

or complaint was heard from Amyas. He bore with wonderful patience all the torture to which the surgeon's clumsy manipulation condemned him, and the forced confinement to his room. He was never known to utter a syllable on the subject, and apparently he had forgiven the injury his brother had done him; but, had any one noticed the demoniac glance which shot from beneath his eyebrows when he left the room for the first time with the consciousness that he was a cripple, he would have suspected that Amyas Dashwood bore bitter malice in his heart.

For years Amyas brooded over his revenge. Not that a glance betrayed his feelings: he displayed the calmness of a stoic when his brother outstripped him at school, and endured with wondrous patience the coarse jests of his playfellows; but he wrote up a long list of insults, for which he intended to take ample revenge, and the feeling of punishing his brother took deep root in his heart, to the exclusion of every fraternal impulse. With Charles the contrary took place. With the standing memento of his passion in his brother's crippled leg ever before him, he made extraordinary efforts to master his passion, and succeeded even better than he could have anticipated. He aided his brother in every possible way—fought his battles for him—lied for him—stole for him—was flogged for him; but nothing moved Amyas. Like Frederick Barbarossa when the Milanese prisoners were brought before him, "his face was as a stone," and no one could imagine the volcano which was raging in his heart.

Time passed on, and the brothers were separated. Charles joined his battery, while Amyas travelled *en grand seigneur*, and increased his knowledge of men and things. At the period his brother was ordered to Canada they had not met for five years, and Charles had almost forgotten the injury he had inflicted on his brother, when Amyas took his revenge in the way most congenial to his feelings.

My readers will remember that Miss Ida Trevanion never returned to her Irish home after her first visit to the continent, and, though engaged to be married to Charles Dashwood, none of her relations were at all aware what had become of her; yet it was simple in the extreme. By one of those strange combinations which repeatedly occur, Amyas Dashwood met with Ida Trevanion, and to see her was to love her. But I do not think he would have gone so far as to marry her, and thus fly in the face of all his worldly father's precepts, but he received some news which

stimulated him to sacrifice anything so that Ida should be his.

It was at Wisbaden that they first met, and Amyas was soon dangling at her heels with very undecided views as to his conduct with regard to her. One day at the hotel, however, he noticed a letter addressed in his brother's well-known hand to Miss Trevanion, and forwarded to her from Ireland. An extraordinary impulse bade him seize the letter, and a perusal convinced him of the ardent love his brother bore to Ida. From that moment Amyas swore she should be his, no matter what price it cost him.

And he had to pay a heavy one. Although Ida was a vain, selfish girl, she was at the same time of a very calculating nature. She was quite willing to let the elder brother take the place of the younger, but it must be on the same terms. She had no idea of helping to gratify her new lover's vengeance at the expense of her own honour. When Amyas made some tentatives of this nature she repulsed him with such calmness that he soon saw the futility of such efforts, and that the only way to gain her was by marriage.

Listening solely to the dictates of his infernal temper, Amyas revenged himself on his brother, and, as is generally the case, paid a bitter penalty himself. Ida was not a woman to make any man happy for a lengthened period. She was certainly a magnificent animal, but that was all. Her education had been sadly neglected, and her husband, who had long been accustomed to associate with the cleverest members of her sex, soon turned with disgust from her inanities. Possession, as usual, was followed by satiety, and Amyas began to find any lady's society more agreeable than that of his legitimate wife. Add to this the thousand unpleasantnesses arising from her anomalous position—residing at Brussels, and her husband not daring openly to avow his marriage for fear of the consequences—and her beauty causing her to be regarded as his mistress—for she was too beautiful for a legitimate affection—and we may imagine that her temper soon began to grow soured. She fancied she had made a bad bargain, and with repentance came a desire to change her position.

Her husband's open liaison with the *prima donna* of the opera was the first signal for battle between them, and Amyas, who was rather proud of his temper, was forced to confess that Ida was a perfect demon. She swore a bitter oath that she would follow the path he indicated, and that

the rupture of the marriage vow should be mutual. She defied him—she said that she would do as she pleased now that he had set her the example, and he was at her mercy. One word from her to old Sir Amyas, and her husband would be a beggar.

The birth of Helen caused no change in this miserable ménage. Her early life was truly a passage through a vale of tears, and her mother treated her cruelly, through the hatred she bore to the father. Fortunately the child was too young to be corrupted; but she was left to the tender mercies of a nurse, being detested by both father and mother, as a further link in the chain which they would both have been so willing to break.

At length the crisis came. While all Brussels was ringing with the daring exploit Amyas had performed, in carrying off M'selle Févert of the opera from her countless swarm of adorers, fresh fuel was added to the excitement by the news that Madame Mowbray (such being the name by which Ida went), had eloped with an officer of the French chasseurs. There was a general laugh at the affair: it was "diamond cut diamond," both, probably, rejoicing in this amicable disruption of their connection, and at the end of the necessary nine days the wonder had died out, to make room for some other marvel.

Amyas Dashwood was truly miserable—not at the loss of his wife, but because he could not attempt to procure a divorce without divulging the secret of his marriage, and thus rendering himself an object of ridicule. It is needless for me to describe *in extenso* all the gradations of sin through which Mrs. Dashwood passed; but, after some three or four years (during which I will do her the credit of saying she paid for the support of her child, although she never saw her), Sir Amyas's failing health gave her a capital opportunity for annoying her husband, of which you may be quite sure she took every advantage. Almost simultaneously he received an appointment as attaché to an embassy, and he was forced to effect a compromise with her. He agreed to settle £150 a year upon her, on condition that she never divulged the secret of her marriage, or taught her daughter who her father was, and to this the lady consented. She passed herself off as a widow, and kept the terms of the treaty faithfully.

At length M. Leblanc offered her marriage, thinking that she might prove of great service to him in his nefarious schemes, and by some inexplicable folly she con-

sented to marry him, and thus loose her hold on Amyas Dashwood. He very soon heard of her imprudent step, and stopped her allowance, as he could hold the threat of prosecution over her as a certain means of compelling her secrecy. By this time Madame Leblanc had gained a certain position, and it would have been highly inconvenient for her to have any scandal raised about her. Nor did she breathe a syllable to Leblanc, for fear he might take advantage of the circumstance to leave her; but that worthy gentleman was perfectly acquainted with all the facts of the case before he had consented to go through the form of matrimony. However, as he did not feel inclined to give up the money without a struggle, he applied to Mr. Worthington, briefly describing the case, and requesting him to threaten Sir Amyas, who had succeeded to the title by this time, into a compromise. The worthy little man received him in the way I have already stated, and he returned to Madame, quite decided to turn her off whenever he found that her attractions did not pay.

He had no occasion, however, to fear this. Madame, in spite of her loose mode of life, was not one of those women on whom passion leaves any traces: with her it was all a matter of calculation, and her charms only grew stronger with maturity. In consequence M. Leblanc was to her a model husband, and they lived on the pleasantest possible footing, until his untimely death forced her into sending for her daughter, and trying to carry on the game with her assistance.

But it must not be supposed that Sir Amyas had lain on a bed of roses all these years. He knew his wife's temper too well not to apprehend an explosion at any moment, and I believe he would willingly have paid the Count a very handsome sum for restoring him to liberty. So soon as his wife was dead he determined never to recognise his daughter, but leave her to struggle with life as she best could. She had probably profited by her mother's lessons, and one woman of that sort, Sir Amyas justly concluded, was sufficient in an aristocratic family. What, then, must his rage have been when he found the nephew whom he intended to make his heir linked with his daughter, and ready to marry her? In his fury he acted quite without his usual caution. The Durlacher held him at bay, and he offered her marriage within a month of his having regained his liberty Poor fellow! he was fated to be taken in by

his desire for vengeance, for in both instances he had been the greatest sufferer.

But his punishment was the more severe when he formed the acquaintance of the daughter whom he had sworn never to recognise, and found in her a pure-minded English girl, of whom any father might be proud. The more he saw of her the more he marvelled how she could be the daughter of the woman whom he had married to spite his brother, and he would have given worlds if he could have unmarried himself, and got rid of the heir who was now coming into the world to rob her of her patrimony. The thought that he must settle all he possessed upon a son whom he believed was not his own, merely for the sake of endowing the title, and not allowing the Dashwoods to be lowered in the world, was gall to him; but what could he do? He was the slave of conventionalism, and dared not act in the manner his conscience urged him was the right.

At length, like a coward, he made up his mind that it would be better not to raise expectations in Helen which he could never satisfy, and, though he yearned to take her to his heart, and pour into her willing ear the story of his misery, feeling sure she would bestow consolation on him, so fettered was he by that artificial system of which he was the vassal, that he would sooner suffer her to be looked upon as a bastard than as the portionless daughter of Sir Amyas Dashwood.

I must do the old gentleman the justice, however, of saying that he was not acquainted with the villainous falsehood Madame Leblanc had employed to mould her daughter to her views; if so, I think his resolution would have been scattered to the winds, and he would have done anything, however romantic and foolish, to insure her peace of mind. He hoped that she would marry Charles, who was of an eccentric turn of mind, and by no means a true Dashwood, for he preferred honest industry to aristocratic beggary: he might not think it derogatory to marry a portionless and illegitimate girl, and would probably be in a position to render her happy.

On the top of these resolutions came the ugly wound which Sir Amyas received in the insurrection. At first his anger bore up against the pain. That filthy democrats should have caused the Britannic envoy to be wounded almost surpassed belief; but the fact was a very stubborn one, and a long illness proved to Sir Amyas that he was

also composed of the ordinary clay, and amenable to all the accidents and incidents of every-day humanity.

Helen's departure from Gürkenhof was a sad blow to him, for he had grown almost unconsciously into the habit of expecting to see her daily, and console himself for the past in studying her honest open face. Her absence had been protracted, and he had worried himself into a fit of the gout, but that being an aristocratic disease he was not particularly annoyed by it. His old wound opened too, and he was twenty times on the point of sending off to Paris and begging Helen to return to him, even at the risk of explaining everything; but his Dashwood pride always interfered at the decisive moment. Altogether he was a most wretched old man, and took to drinking, which could only be mitigated in its effects by enlarged doses of colchicum, causing him to suffer the tortures of the damned in anticipation.

When the news of Helen's return reached him he had been forced to succumb to his enemy, and take to his bed. The gout was performing various acrobatic feats about him, leaping from his feet to his head, and thence to his stomach, with most laudable perseverance. He began to fancy that he was not immortal, and hence he desired to see Helen, and induce her to accept £1000 which he had put aside for her. He had grave doubts as to whether she would take the money, unless he divulged the reasons for giving it to her, and yet he did not wish to blush before his daughter. At any rate he was warned to come to a speedy decision, and at length sent off a messenger to Helen, begging her to come to him at once; he was very ill, and much wished to see her before he went hence and was no more seen.

Poor Helen! she was crying bitterly over the letters when this message reached her, and, as you may suppose, it redoubled her grief. It seemed as if she was fated to lose her father at the moment she had found him. All the happy resolves she had been forming vanished into thin air, and her hopes of acting as a daughter to the unhappy old man were blighted. She had formed such blessed projects; she would strive to draw him back to the right path by kind perseverance, and if she could once induce him to recognise the vitality of religion all else would be easy to her. She had made up her mind to nurse him through his illness, and wean him from his thoughts of anger against her Charles. She never thought of the in-

justice she had suffered at the hands of her father, and if at times she yielded to the seductions of the gold demon, and thought of the money Sir Amyas would leave behind him, you may be quite sure it was only that she might insure her Charles a comfortable and honourable future.

But there was no time to delay. She must hasten to obey Sir Amyas's summons, for to her his slightest wish would now be a law; so she hurried off to the English palace in a fearful state of agitation, hoping that Sir Amyas would meet her half way in her confidence. She felt, she knew not why, that she could never address him as a father unless she received his sanction, and she feared that Sir Amyas would not be able to conquer his pride sufficiently to avow openly his connection with a woman like Madame Leblanc.

Her motto, "Wait and hope," was still to be Helen's consolation, and she fully resolved to devote her days to her father, even if she had not the ineffable pleasure of being recognised by him. She found herself ushered into Sir Amyas's bedroom in a fearful state of uncertainty, rendered still more painful by the slight ray of hope which only made the darkness visible.

CHAPTER XLII.

MENSCHENHASS UND REUE.

THE sight of the poor old man writhing in his pain, his withered face resembling a poached egg as it lay among the downy pillows, produced a sudden revulsion in my Helen. All her resolves were cast to the winds as she noticed the imploring glance he turned upon her, and, rushing forward with a loud cry, she threw her arms round his neck. "My father, my dear father!" was all she could ejaculate, clinging closely to him, as if she feared he might die before he had given her his blessing.

Sir Amyas was intensely moved. Judging the world from his own selfish stand-point, he had not believed that such feelings as Helen displayed could exist. He burst into a flood of very welcome tears, and for a short time indulged in the luxury of an emotion. At length he said,—

"What, my poor girl! you are ready to recognise a father

who has ever behaved to you like a brute? I do not deserve this at your hands, and feared to impart my secret to you, lest you might upbraid me for my neglect. Thank God that I can die with that sin off my conscience! Were it permitted me to live I would strive to undo the past, and place you in a position to which your birth entitles you but, alas! it is too late."

"Oh, father! do not talk about such matters. What care I for the past in this blessed present? Say that I am your daughter, that you love me, and I ask for nothing else."

"And when I am gone you will think kindly of a father who has defrauded you of your fortune, and left you to buffet the world without the protecting shield of money? Yes, I believe you will, Helen, for you are an angel. Would that I had known you earlier! I should have been a better man, and not give way to the insane fear of death which at times unmans me. I feel that I am dying, Helen, but this happy meeting will steel me against all the terrors of a last awful moment. I may linger on for months, but I almost wish the scene to close at once; no medicine can alleviate my sufferings, though your presence will cheer me. You will not leave me again, Helen, but close the eyes of your father?"

"Do not ask me such a question, dearest father; I am wholly yours from this moment. Perhaps my devotion may recall you to a happy life. You cannot leave me at the very moment of meeting under such blessed auspices."

"No, my dear child, you must not deceive yourself; my days are surely numbered, and I will not run any further risk of injuring you. Give me that pocket-book; you will find in it £1000, which I have set apart for you. It is but a small sum; but I believe you are not actuated by selfish motives. You will marry your cousin, I sincerely hope; he has been chastened by misfortunes, and will now be prepared to battle with life, armed with experience."

"And may I bring Charles to see you and crave your forgiveness, dearest father? Believe me, he is truly repentant for having offended you. Not, I mean, in the matter of the marriage," said Helen, with a saucy toss of her head; "but he feels that his unfortunate connection with the revolution must have caused you great pain."

"Well, Helen, I will see him if you wish it, but it will be of little use; I have nothing to leave him, and have

punished him most severely by depriving him of his succession. The only consolation I can offer him is that you should be married directly, and not let my precarious state of health interfere with his happiness. But leave me now, dearest, to think over this blessed interview. To-morrow, I trust, you will move hither, and then we shall be no more parted in this life. Nay, I wish you to go; you need feel no fear about me. Surely you will not refuse to obey the first command your father lays upon you?"

With a heavy heart Helen quitted the embassy, and hastened to send off a note to Charles, telling him of the happy issue. But he had left Gürkenhof two hours previously, summoned to London by a hurried telegraphic despatch from Runciman, and promised to return so soon as matters were satisfactorily arranged. Helen, therefore, anxiously awaited the morning, that she might return to her father's side, and strive, by earnest attention and perfect devotion, to wean him from those thoughts which were still too much of the world, worldly.

But the *fiat* had gone forth: Helen was fated never to see her father again in life. When Fritz entered his master's room the next morning he found the old gentleman bowed over his writing table quite dead. It seemed that his last thoughts had been devoted to Helen, for he had been engaged in writing a codicil to his will. He had scrawled, "I will and bequeath to my beloved daughter, Helen Dashwood, the sum of ten thous——;" and here the pen had fallen from his nerveless hand. The exposure to the cold must have driven the gout to his stomach, and he seemed to have died without a struggle.

Helen was fearfully shocked by this sudden death, and the worst thought of all was that Sir Amyas had died with his defiant, impenitent spirit strong upon him. I am inclined to think, though, that his thoughts had taken a favourable change during the last few months, for I remember that all the scoffing books had been removed from his library, and their place taken by Jeremy Taylor and other works of the same nature. A favourable sign of grace was that, when I proceeded to take down a favourite volume of Voltaire to enforce an argument by a quotation, he did not wince at the angry "pish" I uttered on finding a volume of Bossuet in my hands, but gravely said, "My young friend, I find that sort of reading act as an excellent sedative." It was evident, though, that he did not wish to let all the world know and laugh at his conversion, for the

good books were bound precisely like the naughty books, and my mistake was very natural.

A magnificent funeral, at which the entire court was requested to attend, formed the last honour which could be paid to the dead, and a column of the *Times* was devoted to a description of the many victories he had gained by diplomatic art. On opening his will it was found that he had died comparatively a poor man; he had only contrived to increase his patrimony by £10,000, and had strictly tied the money down to go with the estate. The original £20,000 reverted to his son, the interest of the other ten being paid to Lady Dashwood so long as she remained unmarried or alive. It would then be added to the other sum, and the interest of the whole would form a decent appanage to the title.

The Grand Duke was greatly pleased at hearing of the discovery made by Helen, for he was very fond of her, and so long as she wanted nothing of him he always welcomed her presence. He tried to negotiate a bargain with Lady Dashwood that Helen should be constituted guardian of the young heir, but to this Helen would not consent. She could not forgive the ci-devant opera singer for having deceived her father so grossly, and, I am sorry to say, detested the young Sir Amyas, as much as her angel nature would allow, for defrauding her Charles of his rights. While thinking about the future all doubts were solved by receiving a letter from my hero.

He wrote in magnificent spirits. Runciman had received the long-expected government appointment, and had secured his old collaborateur the editorship of the *Skirmisher*. Charles had £10 a week certain, and did not see what could prevent their speedy marriage. He therefore proposed that she should come over to England at once, and for that purpose Mrs. Fitzspavin was *en route* to chaperone her. She should live with that lady until a decent interval for mourning had elapsed, but it must not be the conventional year. Charles could not understand why he should be compelled to mortify himself as a means to do honour to his deceased uncle.

Helen was only too glad to assent to this offer, for she was beginning to grow tired of an unsettled life, and thought that she deserved some reward for all she had endured. She made known her intention at court, and though the Princess was very grieved at the loss of her darling Helen, as she called her, she was not so selfish as to stand

in the way of her happiness. On the contrary, she sought by every device to increase her happiness, and forced upon her a multitude of presents, which example was followed by the Grand Duke and the Countess. Helen quitted Gürkenhof with enough jewellery to stock a shop, and, better still, with a consciousness that it was only the due recognition of her services to the Grand Ducal family. Before her departure a chapter was held, and she was invested with the second class Grand Cross of the Pommeranz, the scarlet ribbon forming a charming contrast to her mourning dress and blushing cheeks. The Duke with his own hands presented her with the diamond-mounted star of the order, and held a long speech upon her manifold merits, all of which duly appeared in the columns of the *Gürkenhof Nachtwächter*.

Mrs. Fitzspavin soon gained Helen's heart by the praises she poured out on Charles, and they steamed down the Rhine in perfect harmony. At Coblenz Mrs. Fitzspavin was destined to hear a piece of news which relieved her from much nervous apprehension lest her husband would one day make his appearance, and rob her and her boy of all the fruits of her industry. Three gentlemen came on board and stationed themselves close to our ladies, staring them out of countenance with that good breeding peculiar to travelling Englishmen. Finding their *aillades* wasted, however, they fell into conversation, disjointed fragments reaching the ladies' ears.

"That was a rum start, rather, at Ems," said one.

"Oh, you mean Fitzspavin's business! Served him right," replied another.

"Well, I don't know; I think he was quite right in refusing to fight such a cad as Leggitt. He'd no right to come dunning him for money; it would have been time enough to have been on him in England."

"Well, Leggitt didn't think so at any rate; and, after that awful thrashing he gave Fitz in the rooms, he had no resource but fighting."

"A doosid sell, though, for Fitz to be shot through the heart. I only wish he'd lived four-and-twenty hours longer, for then he'd have succeeded to the title, and I should have got the money he owes me. But, holloa! there's a lady fainted."

The news was rather overpowering for Mrs. Fitzspavin, and in a very woman-like fashion she had fainted. However, it would have been mere affectation on her part

to regret a man who had behaved so brutally to her, and perhaps the loss of the title affected her more than that of her husband ; so she speedily recovered from the shock, and before long began talking to Helen about her altered prospects, and what a nice man Mr. Runciman was. They reached England without any further incident or accident, as they were not travelling on our railways ; and Charles strained Helen to his heart, vowing that they should never be separated again, after all the hope deferred they had been forced to endure.

Charles was now a made man. His position insured him an immediate audience with the publishers, and his second novel, not being written under the cramping pressure of poverty, was a decided success. I fancy, too, that constant intercourse with Helen was very beneficial to him, for he began to believe in the truth of woman's love, and his female characters were no longer, as before, arrant coquettes or insipid fools. He made a large sum by his novel, being this time not compelled to listen to the insidious offers of Mr. Belloes ; and that, together with Helen's £1000, was of very great service in furnishing a charming villa at Richmond in readiness for their marriage.

Helen, however, was steady in her resolves not to be married until the proper period had elapsed ; and it was not until Charles jesuitically reminded her of Sir Amyas's expressed wish that his death should not interfere with her marriage, that she consented to shorten the time to nine months. In this decision she was strengthened by the example of Mrs. Fitzspavin, who, being now appointed guardian to her son, a ward of Chancery, and receiving £1000 a year, became Mrs. Runciman. That gentleman had long been arguing in his own mind the propriety of marrying the fair widow, and her allowance decided the question. His £1200 a year was united to her £1000, and there was no doubt that they would pull admirably together. Mrs. Fitzspavin had an intense reverence for Mr. Runciman's talents, while he considered her the most foolish woman he had ever met, so they were exactly suited to each other. I am happy to say, for the honour of literature, that he made her an excellent husband ; and she, fool though she was, humoured him to the top of his bent, and ended by becoming his thorough master. Last year there was a picture in the Academy of "Hercules and Omphale," in which I am certain I detected the features of Mr. and Mrs. Runciman. It was painted by Mr. Styffe, whom the

Times honoured by calling "that rising young artist." Charles's friendship had been a tower of strength to him, and judicious puffing has drawn popular attention to his works. They are not a bit better now than when first he entered the pictorial arena, but fashion has made a man of him.

But I am running ahead too fast—my usual fault. I have not yet told you about my Helen's marriage, and to omit that would be an unpardonable sin in the eyes of all my lady readers. But I can assure you that, though I was present at the marriage, I cannot remember how Helen was dressed—whether she wore the regulation orange blossoms and veil, or how many clergymen assisted at the awful ceremony. I was too busily engaged in studying Helen's face, which revealed a world of emotion, but not a trace of apprehension about the step she was going to take. Love was evidently the master passion, and had excluded all else; she was imbued by that perfect confidence—that love which casteth out fear, and felt that her lot was cast in pleasant places.

But, on consideration, I am inclined to believe that Helen was married in a bonnet, for I remember we all drove down to Richmond, and, after inspecting "the bower of felicity," had a tremendous spread at the Star and Garter. I don't know how much champagne I drank on the auspicious occasion; but I have a vivid remembrance of a fearful headache the next morning, and a very faint impression of how I got to bed. But I was a young and foolish bachelor in those days, and envied Charles his happiness. Since then I have put away childish things, and can go through the mockery of a wedding breakfast without disqualifying myself as a professor of teetotalism.

Not long after the wedding the Marquis of Lancing resigned his magnificent embassy. He had made a most extraordinary muddle in his diplomatic post, and confusion had been worse confounded. Some troublesome member of the Lower House, who felt no reverence for birth, and denied *in toto* its claims to hereditary legislation, had insisted on a return, showing the amount of falling off in our commercial transactions with Timbuktu, and the incompetence of the Marquis was proved beyond a doubt. The government was forced to yield to the pressure: itself the result of a compromise, it had no internal stability, and dared not risk its existence on the retention of an obnoxious official; so a special messenger was despatched at

once to the Marquis, urging him to send in his resignation, while his recall was slowly sent over in a sailing ship. Hence it was quite evident that the Marquis resigned of his own accord, as any one may see by a comparison of the dates, if he has the patience to wade through the interminable Blue Book, printed on the subject of a private grievance at the expense of the country.

But the return of the Marquis to England did not produce the desired result: the sturdy merchant regarded it as a mockery of justice, and raved about impeachment, because he had lost £8000 by the minister's *lâches*, while the Marquis bullied the unhappy government into believing that he was a very ill-used man, and threatened to rush into print unless his wrongs were redressed. As it was impossible to offend a man who had a dozen votes in his pocket, the Marquis was rewarded for his distinguished services by being appointed "Waste-paper basket," and promised the next vacancy in the Garter bede-roll.

During the quarrel with the government Charles and the Marquis got to loggerheads, because the former would not devote the *Skirmisher* to his cause, and was even obliged to refuse admission to the letters which the Marquis sent weekly, and which would have swamped even the *Times*. However, the causa teterrima belli once removed by Susan's intercession, they grew fast friends again; in fact, the Marquis could not do without him long, for the magnificent account of the "Mission to Timbuktu" had to be prepared for the press, and who could do it so well as Charles? My hero set to work with his whole heart, and, by carefully studying every writer on the subject, and converting the Marquis's copy into pipe-lights, succeeded in producing that magnificent book, blazing with ultramarine and gold, which may still be seen holding the place of honour in Mrs. Jones's (of Plateglass) boudoir.

The Marquis was delighted with his literary achievements, and fancied that he was of the stuff of which authors are made; so since that period he has regularly produced a novel per annum, and is the great admiration of all the bonnet makers who surround Leicester Square. To evince his gratitude to Charles he put him into parliament at the next dissolution, and nobly permitted him to vote as he pleased, although he makes bitter complaints to Susan in private about the "fellah not sticking up for family as he ought to do. But that's the worst of having to do with those deuced papers;" and the Marquis consoles

himself by going down to the House, and dribbling forth three mortal hours of twaddle on the exclusion of Jews from parliament, or the impudence of those newspaper fellahs, who dare to poke their ribald jests at the aristocracy. Altogether he is a very harmless, good-tempered gentleman, and, I am glad to say, behaved with unexampled bravery at the Alma. At the first news of war he thought slaughter a much more exciting amusement than horse-racing, and insisted on going out as a volunteer. He was found after the battle with a clubbed musket, four Russians lying round him, and unable to move from a very pretty stab through his thigh. He got put to rights, and tried the siege, but soon grew tired of that. There was no excitement in watching the trench work, so he went on board ship, and managed to leave Balaclava just before the great storm. He bore his honours very blushingly, however, and did not attempt any disguise as to his motives for returning home: "urgent private affairs," in the shape of heart-rending letters from Susan, who had no wish to be a widow, had impelled him to come home, and he modestly declined all the ovations offered him by his tenantry. He is rather a bore, it is true, with his eternal account of the battle of the Alma, of which he saw nothing except the smoke and the Russian grey coats, but not a bit more so than those unlucky old gentlemen who introduced the fashion of describing the siege of Sebastopol after dinner, and proved infallibly, by means of decanters, nuts, and wine-glasses, how the siege must be conducted to insure certain success. One thing I am bound to add in his favour—he did not write a book on the subject of the war. Although Mr. Belloc was rumoured to have gone down on his knees to him, and implored him to write the book of the season, he was inflexible. If he had had anything to write about the case might have been different, but it was utterly impossible to dilute a gun-shot wound into a quarto volume, and on such a subject the Marquis understood no trifling.

When those wondrous letters of Mr. Russell stirred the nation to its depths by describing the sufferings of our magnificent soldiers, and the apathy of a selfish government, the Marquis set to work in a practical manner to relieve them. He laid out £10,000 in purchases, and, as he chartered a vessel of his own, having a wise distrust of government transports, the comforts reached their destination before the war had terminated. He gained the hearty admiration of the troops, who drank his health in flowing

bumpers of strong ale, and when he read the account in the papers he was compelled to allow that "there was some gratitude in the plebs after all."

CHAPTER THE LAST.

ANCHORED !

IT is with a feeling of regret that I commence my last chapter of the eventful life of my hero. I have grown into a liking for the young fellow, for, though he has behaved like an ass in many matters, he has retrieved his position manfully. He has steadily won his way up that gradus ad Parnassum on which every author who is imbued with the dignity of his profession strives to attain the topmost peak, and I am happy to say he has succeeded, and now enjoys an extensive and delicious prospect of the promised land beyond. It will only depend upon himself whether he remain at the summit or slowly descend into the vale, trusting to his past renown to insure him a tranquil and useful existence.

I am afraid, though, that, like too many authors, he will only employ literature as a stepping-stone to something promising greater publicity. He is tired of having all his good things concealed under the cloak of the anonymous writer, and is conscious that his published works offer but a faint reflex of the versatility of his genius. His parliamentary career has not satisfied him either, for he has found to his surprise that his tongue is not so ready as his pen, and that it requires great nerve to face the House of Commons assembled in parliament. Hence he generally gives a silent vote, and is looked upon as a very rising man. Some day or other he will have an opportunity of extorting some good berth from government, and spend the balance of his life as a useful member of the governing classes.

In the meanwhile he is enjoying the *jucunda et idonea vitæ* in full measure; he is blessed with a quiver full of children, the advent of each being marked by the publication of a new book; in fact, it has become a standing jest in the profession, and many bets are pendent at this moment, whether Mr. Dashwood's next book or Mrs. Dash-

wood's next baby will be first announced in the *Times*. Still he is very happy, and feels secure of the future, which is the main security for permanent domestic serenity. Love has had no occasion to fly out of windows in his household, owing to the entrance of earking poverty by the doorway.

His best friend is James Worthington, who with Jane lives in a magnificent country house near Twickenham. That wonderful gold discovery which seemed solely intended to convert all honest men into rogues, and all the rogues into honest men, had not failed in exercising its effects upon young Worthington. He was too wise to give up a certain present for an uncertain future, and consequently did not go to the diggins, but he took care to benefit by the opportunity. He opened a spirit store, and, by a judicious blending of water with the fiery spirit, which profited himself and did no injury to the consumer, he rapidly turned his crowns into pounds. But it was not a period when a man could confine his attention to one branch of trade. The great stream of emigration flowed past their doors, and they must take advantage of it in evcry possible way. His flocks sold at unexampled prices, and his father, by going up to the diggins and buying gold, speedily amassed an immense fortune. His greatest coadjutor, strange to say, was Joe Bowles the bushranger. The bagful of gold he possessed imbued him with a strong feeling of the rights of property, and he stood by old Worthington during an attack made on his store by a party of ruffians. The old man never resied till he had procured a full pardon for the bushranger, who was converted into an honest man by the simple process of being trusted. He was in a fair way of being turned from an Ishmaelite into an Israelite, so close were the bargains he made, when the old man gave up his store, and gratefully presented him with the good-will and fixiugs.

But the sword had worn out the scabbard. Old Worthington was unpleasantly reminded of his mortality at the period when fortune was smiling on him most benignantly. He had long before paid every farthing he owed in England, and his only desire was to return to the old country and lay his bones with his wife; but this was not permitted him. He fell asleep tranquilly as a child one fine afternoon by the kitchen fire, after setting his household in order, and being at peace with all men. His one great sin will surely be forgiven him, in consideration of his many years of incessant toil and sincere repentance.

He bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to Jane, with reversion to her children, with the exception of £10,000 he settled upon Helen, and left a name behind him in Australia which will not be forgotten by future generations. I believe, indeed, that an enterprising publisher at Melbourne has already published an Australian "Joe Miller," in which the greater portion of old Worthington's auctioneering jests are embodied.

With the old man's death Jane felt an irresistible longing to return to England, and on winding up his affairs James found they had close upon £200,000 between them. There was no necessity for them to endure privations longer, and they wisely preferred their luxuries first hand, instead of waiting the tedious process of a voyage to Melbourne, and thence to Stapleton. They reached home in safety, and James tried a gentleman's life for three months; but then he was worn out by doing nothing and forced idleness. He left Jane at perfect liberty to carry out her own inclinations, but followed his own bent by setting up an immense Australian agency, dealing in every possible article from a pin to a steam-engine. As he confines his attention almost exclusively to this, and has not yet indulged in the expensive luxury of bank directorship, he is sure to succeed, and is greatly respected indeed already. He is famous for his dinner parties; and his one mania is importing Australian wine, which he insists on your drinking, although you would much prefer sticking to his claret. In his dealings with his clerks he is liberal in the extreme, and you need not be afraid that any of them will imitate his own gloomy passage of life by being forced to keep up appearances on £120 a year.

Jane and Helen are sworn friends, and I may add that the crowning honour was set upon them recently by their being presented to the Queen by the Marchioness of Lancing, Helen gaining considerable attention by her red ribbon. It is true that they had to endure a very fierce squeeze, and almost fainted in the press; but then think of the honour. What was the loss of a bracelet or two, or a dress destroyed, compared with that? Charles wrote a very savage article on the subject in the *Skirmisher*, and I dare-say in ten years time some great change will be effected, and ladies will not be forced to undergo an amount of squeezing at St. James's to which the crowd at an execution is merely a jest.

Lady Dashwood held out for two years against the pro-

visions of her husband's will ; but then nature re-asserted its sway, and she married the Baron von Strudelwitz, being very careful not to tell him of the threatened loss of her allowance. But the rage of the Baron when he detected the deception was unbounded, and he led the poor woman a precious life until she got Chancery to manage the affairs of the young baronet, and grant her an allowance. She takes the greatest possible care of her boy, and I think is going the very way to work to kill him by kindness : if he dies her fate will be pitiable. Her good looks are all gone in a violent attack of small pox, and her husband only maintains a sullen civility towards her for the sake of swindling her out of her money.

The poor professor was fated never to see his life history welcomed by the nation and running through countless editions, as he had fondly anticipated. He went to law soon after the downfall of the *Tricolor* with the proprietor of the *Convolvulus Gardens*, and an adverse decision upset the small amount of sanity still remaining. He is now confined in Hanwell, his delusion being that he is the "man in the moon," and engaged in getting up subscriptions for an aerial railway with that little known country. He is only dangerous when the moon is at the full, for he regards it as a balloon bringing some foreign potentate to drive him from his throne. Charles was thus absolved from his promise of writing his life, and I fancy was not grieved at the disappointment.

I have now alluded to the fortunes of all the characters who have been mixed up more or less with the history of my hero, excepting one, and he deserves a separate paragraph, as representative of a system on which more abuse has been lavished than on any other profession or trade. I allude to that excellent man and distinguished publisher, Mr. Belloes, who has gone on, since we last met him, from one success to another, and could retire at any moment upon £50,000. This money, authors would assert, he has made by depriving them of the fair reward of their exertions, but as I am inclined to think by a fair exercise of his talents, and a profound knowledge of the literary market.

I am aware that, in expressing such an opinion, I run counter to the views—may I call them the prejudices?—of most of my professional brethren; but suppose we look at the matter calmly for a moment. Mr. Belloes is a tradesman, nor is he ashamed of the fact; and the first rule of trade is to buy in the cheapest, sell in the dearest, market.

He is not to blame because he carries out this principle in its integrity, and the charge of robbing authors of their just claim falls to the ground of itself. He gives as much as he can afford, or thinks he can afford, for certain literary wares, and runs the risk of the speculation. A book may succeed, or it may prove an utter failure. In the latter case an author is not called upon to reimburse any portion of his receipts; so, by common fairness, he cannot expect any further sum to be paid him because his book is a great success. It may be individually a hardship, but the gain made on his novel, or whatever it may be, goes to compensate for losses sustained on others.

It is quite true that there are publishers who will deliberately try to defraud an author, but they are not of a character and status such as Mr. Belloc holds: their number is very small, and they can easily be avoided. But I am not bound to join with Vicary in his indiscriminate abuse of publishers; nor, because that gentleman writes a book which Mr. Belloc refuses to publish, do I think him justified in spreading reports about his unfairness and tendency to cheat innocent authors. Ah! if publishers could only tell their tale—if they could but make known the hard bargains forced upon them by men of reputation, and the meannesses of which members of a liberal profession are at times guilty—I think my readers would be disposed to allow that between authors and publishers it is a very pretty game of “diamond cut diamond.”

But I am disposed to believe that publishers are not so much to blame for the present system of things, in which it is regarded as a maniacal act for an author to sit down and write a three-volume novel, the honorarium not repaying, in most cases, one-tenth part of his time and labour. There is no other profession so open as literature: any one possessed of a liberal education and a certain knack of word portraiture can write a novel, and it is growing the fashion for idle ladies to scribble their impressions, and thrust them down the throat of the public by the aid of a great name. The publishers find that the reading world is disposed to regard all novels with equal indulgence—I always except those which belong to great writers—and they naturally prefer getting their goods for nothing. Surely they are not to be blamed for this, although I have heard it before now brought as a serious allegation against them by disappointed authors.

The truth is that no particular conjuring is required in

writing the ordinary novel, and the public are too careless to discriminate. Hence, in nine cases out of ten, the professional author takes to more lucrative employment, and leaves the field of novel writing to the ladies. The character of the novels may degenerate, but, as long as the receipts do not fall off, you may be quite sure that publishers will not strive to make an alteration in the system.

I might refer to many other circumstances which have led to the decline and fall of the novel, but it is not necessary to reveal the secrets of the prison-house further. I have tried to set my readers right on a point about which very considerable misunderstanding exists, and to show that the publishers are not so black as they are painted. And I am in a position to speak from a lengthened experience, and when I say that I am not one of the literary *frondeurs*, who desire to introduce anarchy into our present system, I trust it will be believed that I am merely giving the publishers that degree of justice which I think they are entitled to. In Mr. Belloc's I have tried to draw the portrait of a high-class publisher of the day, and trust "that I have nothing extenuated, nor set down aught in malice."

I must add a few last words in the shape of a preface, which, being generally written last, may very well come in here. In the story of Charles Dashwood I have dealt with characters of the day—persons I have met with, as Mr. N. P. Willis would call them; but if my readers are desirous to fit them to individuals they will find themselves mistaken. I have purposely generalised, and, although there certainly is such an *Ξδωλον* as Mr. Pincer in existence, I have given many attributes to that estimable gentleman which do not exist in the real Simon Pure. It is the same with the incidents; many of them have occurred within my experience, but none of them exactly as I have described them. I have modified them, exaggerated them, or weakened them as I thought proper, or as they would best further the interests of my story, and woven together a certain amount of fact with a very considerable stock of fiction.

I am obliged to say this much in self-defence, for now-a-days everybody likes to be personal, and it is getting too much the fashion to attack individuals under the convenient cloak of fiction; so I hereby give public warning to my readers that, if A. finds any trait which he thinks offensive to himself, he may safely refer it to B., and *vice versa*. My object has been to attack men not so much as things; and while striving to hold up to general notice the

accursed selfishness which "is, and moves, and has its being" among us at the present day, I am too much of a philosopher to expect that I shall produce the slightest effect. I have tried my best to adhere as closely as possible to the motto of the great moralist which adorns my book page, and shines there like a real diamond which has found its way amidst a parcel of *strass*, and though now conscious of many grave defects, I trust that the earnestness of purpose which has spurred me on will be accepted as a condonation for many shortcomings.

Of my hero I have no more to say. He has learned that the only path to success is to be found in strict attention to the duties of his profession, and there is no fear of his going astray again. But I do not wish to hold him up as a model to the ingenuous youth of England ; I have rather drawn his career for the purpose of showing what is to be avoided. The chances were much against him, and he might as easily have turned out a scamp as an honest man. But I am prosing sadly. With the completion of my self-imposed task I feel more strongly the faults pervading the English system of society, and the terrible pitfalls which yawn in the path of unwary youth. The stern moralist will upbraid me for allowing Charles Dashwood to escape without the just punishment for his manifold offences ; but I hope that the fair creatures who follow his fortunes will owe me thanks for leaning to the side of mercy. To all I bid good speed. *Vivite, valete que !*

T'other day, between the acts of the "Messiah," I took up the *Morning Post*. My eye fell upon the fashionable intelligence column, and was soon attracted by the following paragraph :—

"It is with much regret we announce the death of the young Sir Aniyas Claude Ivor Dashwood. He is succeeded in the title and estates by his first cousin, Mr. Charles Dashwood, M P. for Rogueham, and author of several highly distinguished works."

"Well," I thought to myself, "Master Charley has considerably more luck than he deserves ;" and I daresay my readers, who by this time know as much of his antecedents as myself, will be of the same opinion. But I forbear. I am engaged to dine with Charles next week, and,

in consideration of his magnificent Larose, cannot afford to quarrel with him; at any rate, I may be allowed to say (and I do not think my hero will feel offended at it) that his success through life is owing to his darling Helen, who has kept him steadily to the collar, and, by her consolation and control, has prevented it chafing him.

But all this time I am missing a magnificent chance. Charles will, of course, give up the *Skirmisher*, and the editorship again reverts to Runciman. I must try for that at once, so, leaving the *Messiah*, and trusting to obtain my critique of it from the valuable columns of the morning papers, I hurry off to write a note of application to my friend.

Of course, I am too late. Runciman regrets much that I had not applied sooner. He has received two hundred and ninety-seven notes on the subject, and an Irish gentleman has threatened to make it a personal matter if he does not obtain the appointment.

N B — From my knowledge of Runciman, and the dear regard he has for his skin, I think the Irish gentleman will succeed.

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